

Chicago Workers' Voice

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This issue of the *CWV Theoretical Journal* features

- * **Articles continuing discussion on "Socialism in One Country"**
A draft article by Dave and three articles commenting in these issues plus transcripts of some discussion of this at the Fourth Congress of the MLP.
- * **Replies from two comrades to the "Open Letter" which attacks the CWV and the "minority"**
- * **An examination of how Marx and Engels analyzed colonialism by Julie, Chicago**
- * **Part 3 of Fred's "Bloodbath" series and an additional article by Joseph opposing Fred's theories**

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Editorial Guide to the Fourth Issue of the *CWV Theoretical Journal*

In this issue we open up discussion on another of the theoretical questions on which differences festered inside the former MLP, the general question of "Socialism in One Country". We present four articles on this topic and the transcript of the discussion on this topic at the Fourth Congress of the MLP. We should caution our readers that these articles do not necessarily represent the final, "cast-in-stone" views of the authors. This discussion is still at its beginning stages among our comrades and friends, views will undoubtedly be developed, refined, changed, etc., in the course of this discussion. The CWV would particularly like to thank Dave for allowing us to print his draft article. It has obviously served as a vehicle for other comrades to develop their thinking on this issue. We are hoping that the publication of these articles will serve to stimulate further study, analysis and refining of views on this complex topic. Readers of the *Theoretical Journal* are encouraged to submit letters and articles on this topic (or others that we have dealt with).

Many of the readers of the *CWV Theoretical Journal* have received in the mail "An Open Letter in Reply to the Former Chicago Branch and its Allies". For this reason we are not reprinting it in this issue of the *Journal*. We will enclose copies of this document to those on our mailing list who may not have seen it. If we err and don't send you a copy and you need one, let us know and we will send it. We are printing here two comrades' responses to this "Open Letter". Joseph has written two more articles that we did not have space for in this issue. If you want them, let us know.

Below are listed the articles with brief comments on their contents.

A. "Socialism in One Country"

"Socialism in One Country" and the Revision of Leninism, Draft Article, by Dave

This slogan and policy was a revision of Lenin's views by Stalin.

"On Dave's Draft Article on "Socialism in One Country" and the Revision of Leninism, by Joseph, Detroit

Dave mixes various issues which have to be looked at separately. For example, Joseph says that state capitalism did not become consolidated in the Soviet Union because Stalin had mistaken theoretical formulations such as socialism in one country. Rather these theoretical formulations were used to

cover over reality.

**An Answer to Dave*, by Phil, Seattle
Dave has some good points. It is not clear, in Phil's view, whether there was any chance for the Soviet Union to advance to socialism. Maybe there was a 10% chance.

**Some Points on Phil's Remarks*, by Mark, Detroit

Disagrees with Phil's general conclusion that "capitalism is not a stage of history that can be avoided." Discusses Marxist theory on collectivization of agriculture versus what was actually done in the Soviet Union, and Marx's analysis of the rural commune in Russia.

**Transcript of the Discussion on Socialism in One Country at the Fourth Congress of the MLP*

Gives readers a view of some of the thinking (and, or wild speculation) that was going on among some of the MLP comrades at the time of the Fourth Congress in the fall of 1992. Some of the differences that existed but were never resolved within the MLP.

B. Replies to the "Open Letter"

**An Open Letter that Wants to Close Minds*, by Joseph, Detroit

The open letter wants to stop the debate between the "majority" and "minority" of the former MLP. It ignores the role of anti-revisionist struggle in the history of the MLP. It opposes a fight over principle.

**Critical Notes - Reply to the SFBA/Boston "Open Letter" Posted 6-21-94*, by NC, Los Angeles

The "Open Letter" distorts reality and wants to avoid debate with those who disagree.

[note from CWV: Since the open letter appeared, the "majority" seems to

have shut up, none of the signers have communicated any letters, documents, polemics to the CWV comrades in Chicago.]

C. An article from the other side

**What Can Be Learned from the Bloodbath Regarding Approaches to Investigation, Part 3*, by Fred, Seattle

There are all these questions and we don't know anything. It is impossible to really know much. Everything we did and thought was wrong. The present era is, "zillions of times more developed than the past, which has transcended the old social contradictions and struggles of the past."

(We had intended to print this article in issue #3, but ran out of room. Some of the polemics we have carried have referred to this article. Here it is for you to judge for yourselves.)

D. Another held-over article

**Plebian Class Consciousness and Socialist Revolution*, by Joseph, Detroit

Joseph opposes Fred's view that class polarization is not sharpening. Demonstrates that Fred does not consider class struggle as fundamental nor does Fred look to socialist revolution as a goal.

(We had also intended to print this article in issue #3.)

E. A new article

**How Marx and Engels Analyzed Colonialism*, by Julie, Chicago

Looks at the writings of Marx and Engels on colonialism in light of the views of the "majority". Marx and Engels had a much fuller appreciation of the historically positive and negative aspects of capitalist development and colonialism than do some of our former comrades.

CWV Theoretical Journal

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“Socialism in one country” and the Revision of Leninism

by Dave, Amherst
6/24/94

Stalin became the principle orator of the doctrine of “socialism in one country” from 1924 until late 1927 when “socialism in one country” became a cornerstone of Soviet government policy and a launching pad toward the all out industrialization and collectivization campaign of the late 1920’s and early 1930’s.

All of the theoretical twists and turns which characterized the inner party debates over this question found their roots in the initial confusion which Stalin created over the definition of socialism and the transition to socialism. Though Stalin attempted to base his theories on Leninism (really only on a handful of quotations from Lenin), it was only through a confusion of Lenin’s thought that Stalin could arrive at the general theoretical principle of “socialism in one country”.

Two aspects of socialism

The fact that the first world war simultaneously brought the hardships of the great masses of people to a breaking point and had created the economic conditions (monopoly capitalism) for further social development, convinced Lenin that this period was the eve of the socialist revolution across the globe. The necessity for the political victory of socialism by the proletariat was therefore the order of the day. In what was to become a famous passage in the later inner-party debates over “socialism in one country”, Lenin gave a general picture of the way in which socialism would develop in the epoch of revolutions.

“Uneven economic and political development is an absolute law of capitalism. Hence, the victory of socialism is possible first in several or even one capitalist country alone. After expropriating the capitalists and organizing their own

socialist production, the victorious proletariat of that country will rise against the rest of the world - the capitalist world - attracting to its cause the oppressed classes of other countries.... (On the Slogan for a United States of Europe, Aug 1915)

Stalin’s later arguments over this issue revolved around the notion that Lenin was the first to formulate the general principle of “socialism in one country”. But even the most cursory review of Lenin’s writings on this subject show that this notion holds no water.

In fact, Lenin’s position was no simple formula, but was determined by concrete circumstances. Stalin’s interpretation of the “On the Slogan” article is blind to any of these particulars. Certainly, Lenin’s point was that the socialist revolution might originate in one country, but to extend this to a general conclusion about the nature of the revolution in individual countries is inconsistent with Leninism.

In interpreting what Lenin had to say about socialism and the transition to socialism, the emphasis on the political and economic significance of the victory of socialism must be considered. In other words, the ways in which Lenin used these two aspects of the victory of socialism (the political and the economic) vary according to the context in which he was writing. For example, in “On the Slogan for a United States of Europe”, he was writing in the context of a general discussion about the way in which the socialist revolution would originate in Europe. He concluded that the proletariat would, due to the uneven economic and political development of the capitalist system, come to power in a few or even one capitalist country. He glosses over the huge theoretical question of the tasks of economic construction of the socialist order, but this question was answered in

the case of Russia in many other articles and pamphlets.

We must now once again give top priority to this transitional stage and exert every effort to achieve it. Regarded from the international point of view, from the standpoint of the victory over capitalism in general, this is a paramount task of the entire socialist revolution. To defeat capitalism in general, it is necessary, in the first place, to defeat the exploiters and to uphold the power of the exploited, namely, to accomplish the task of overthrowing the exploiters by revolutionary forces; in the second place, to accomplish the constructive task, that of establishing new economic relations, of setting an example of how this should be done. These two aspects of the task of accomplishing the socialist revolution are indissolubly connected, and distinguish our revolution from all previous ones, which never went beyond the destructive aspect. (Our Foreign and Domestic Position and Party Tasks, Nov 1920)

Therefore, in consideration of all of this, it is perfectly correct to understand Leninism, as Marxism in the age of imperialism and the proletarian revolution, as an expression of practical proletarian politics, in the light of the dual aspect of the question of the victory of socialism. That is, at times, Lenin spoke about the necessity of the victory of socialism in the political sense (for the victory of the dictatorship of the proletariat which is a prerequisite for the transition to socialism), and at other times, especially during the final few years of his life, the tasks involved in the economic victory of socialism were discussed.

The “final victory” (i.e., the complete suppression of the imperialists around the world, the organization of socialist production) of socialism may or may not be possible in one country alone.

In the particular case of Russia, due to its backward economic condition, Lenin denied not only the possibility of the "immediate transition to socialism", but also postulated a precarious development of the internal socialist elements over decades if the international proletariat did not consolidate their political power.

"But what interests us is not the inevitability of this complete victory of socialism [in the world], but the tactics that we, the Russian Communist Party... should pursue to prevent the West-European counter revolutionary states from crushing us... We, too, lack enough civilization to enable us to pass straight on to socialism, although we do have the political requisites for it." (Better Fewer, But Better, 1923)

And further,

"I repeat that this is not surprising, for it will take generations to remould the small farmer, and recast his mentality and habits. The only way to solve this problem of the small farmer - to improve, so to speak, his mentality - is through the material basis, technical equipment, the extensive use of tractors and other farm machinery and electrification on a mass scale. This would remake the small farmer fundamentally and with tremendous speed. If I say this will take generations, it does not mean centuries. But you will know perfectly well that to obtain tractors and other machinery and to electrify this vast country is a matter that may take decades in any case. Such is the objective situation." (Report., 10th Congress, March 1921)

The question of "socialism in Russia", as described by Lenin, is leagues away from the general principle of "socialism in one country", as formulated by Stalin.

How Stalin revised Leninism

The early view of Stalin on international questions of socialist revolution mirrored Lenin's line. The early years of the revolution were chaotic and, when the NEP retreat was sounded, Stalin's politics adhered to the tasks of the day: reorganization of the economy, unity

and defense against the international bourgeoisie.

In January 1924 Lenin finally dies, leaving the Bolsheviks to continue the uphill fight against the forces of international capital and against the unfavorable (from the standpoint of the transition to socialism) forces of the NEP within Russia. Shortly thereafter, Stalin writes the famous pamphlet called "The Foundation of Leninism" which outlines the basic tenets of Leninism. In this, the original 1924 version, Stalin actually approaches the question of "socialism in one country". Stalin's preliminary remarks to "socialism in one country" include an emphasis on the international character of the revolution and an emphasis on the "weakest link" in this imperialist chain, where the revolution will break out first. "Now we must speak of the world proletarian revolution; for the separate national fronts of capital have become links in a single chain called the world front of imperialism, which must be opposed by a common front of the revolutionary movement in all countries." Here is what he states next:

"But the overthrow of the power of the bourgeoisie and establishment of the power of the proletariat in one country does not yet mean that the complete victory of socialism has been ensured. The principle task of socialism - the organization of socialist production - has still to be fulfilled. Can this task be fulfilled, can the final victory of socialism be achieved in one country, without the joint efforts of the proletarians in several advanced countries? No, it cannot. To overthrow the bourgeoisie the efforts of one country is sufficient; this is proved by the history of our revolution. For the final victory of socialism, for the organization of socialist production, the efforts of one country, particularly of a peasant country like Russia, are insufficient; for that, the efforts of the proletarians of several advanced countries are required." (Foundations of Leninism, first edition, Apr 1924)

The period from April 1924 - December 1924 becomes a gestation pe-

riod for the "socialism in one country" idea since this issue does not so explicitly come up again until Stalin's December 1924 article entitled "The October Revolution and the Tactics of the Russian Communists". It is here in December 1924 where the theoretical revisions which Stalin makes come out in full force.

Socialism in one country

In December 1924, Stalin publishes "The October Revolution and the Tactics of the Russian Communists". Stalin here claims that there were two aspects of the October revolution, 1) the alliance between the working class and the peasantry and 2) the dictatorship of the proletariat as a result of the victory of "socialism in one country". This, he states, is the "essence of the October revolution".

Previously, in the years 1921-1924, along with Lenin, the victory of socialism was conceived of in its dual aspect. Lenin was fully aware of the material prerequisites necessary for the building of a socialist society, a society free from exploitation. Marx and Engels had already discussed this long ago in their analysis of historical progression. Therefore, Stalin is beginning to make a theoretical jump at this juncture - equating the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat with the victory of "socialism in one country", in all its economic potentialities.

"The dictatorship of the proletariat is the class alliance between the proletariat and the laboring masses of the peasantry for the purpose of overthrowing capital, for achieving the final victory of socialism...." (The October Revolution..., Dec 1924)

And later on, Stalin hints at the definition of "the final victory of socialism":

"Up to now, has this sympathy and this assistance [of the European proletariat], coupled with the might of our Red Army and the readiness of the workers and peasants of Russia to defend their socialist fatherland to the last - has all

this been sufficient to beat off the attacks of the imperialists and to win us the necessary conditions for the serious work of construction? Yes it has been sufficient. Is this sympathy growing stronger or is it waning? Unquestionably, it is growing stronger. Hence, have we favorable conditions, not only for pushing on with the organizing of socialist economy, but also, in our turn, for giving support to the West-European workers and to the oppressed peoples of the East? Yes, we have." (The October Revolution..., Dec 1924)

The fate of the Soviet Union was becoming a practical concern for the Bolsheviks more and more as the 14th Congress (1925) approached. Stalin is beginning to sing the praises of the 'inherent strength' of the revolution at this time.

The isolation of the Soviet Union, its economic recovery well under way under the NEP, and the "stabilization" of the imperialist system after the suppression of the German insurrection in October 1923 begin to reflect in the attitude of the party leaders. The Bolsheviks still retain state power in an isolated, economically backward society which will not receive any help from the international proletariat in the near future. The fate of the revolution in the Soviet Union is now at stake. The fate of socialism, according to Stalin, rests on the relationship of the working class and the peasantry.

"When the question is asked: Can we build socialism by our own efforts? what is meant is: can the contradictions that exist between the proletariat and the peasantry in our country be overcome or not?

Leninism answers that question in the affirmative: yes, we can build socialism, and we will build it together with the peasantry under the leadership of the working class." (Results of the work of the 14th Conference of the RCP(B), May 1925)

Here, in May 1925, a more clear turn is evident. Stalin has separated the fate of socialism from its international aspect and yet still attributes this conclusion to

Leninism. The "victory of the socialist path" rests on the community of interests between the peasantry and the working class. If this victory is not possible, then "there would have been no point in taking power in October and carrying out the October revolution". The crucial theoretical revision lies both in the splitting of the international and national components of the revolution and in the overestimation of the economic condition of the Soviet Union.

After quoting Lenin once more from "On the slogan for a United States of Europe" (1915), Stalin writes:

"In other words, the land of the proletarian dictatorship, which is surrounded by capitalists, can, it appears, not only by its own efforts eliminate the internal contradictions between the proletariat and the peasantry, but can and must, in addition, build socialism, organize its own socialist economy and establish an armed force in order to go to the aid of the proletarians in the surrounding countries in their struggle to overthrow capital.

Such is the fundamental thesis of Leninism on the victory of socialism in one country." (Results of the Work of the 14th Conference of the RCP(B), May 1925)

The theory of "socialism in one country" is now almost completely developed. Its main aspects involve the separation of the international and national aspects of the revolution, the confusion of the political and economic aspects of the victory of socialism, and on the latent nationalism which it promotes.

"Is it possible to develop large scale industry in the conditions of capitalist encirclement without credits from abroad?

Yes, it is possible. It will be accomplished by great difficulties, we shall have to go through severe trials, nevertheless we can industrialize our country without credits from abroad, in spite of all those difficulties." (Questions and Answers, June 1925)

And further,

"Of course, the sooner assistance comes from the West the better, the sooner shall we overcome these contradictions in order to deliver the finishing stroke to private capital and to achieve the complete victory of socialism in our country, the building of a complete socialist society. But even if we do not receive help, we shall not abandon our work (applause) and we shall not be daunted by difficulties. Whoever is weary, whoever is scared by difficulties, whoever is losing his head, let him make way for those who have retained their courage and staunchness. (Applause) We are not the kind of people to be scared by difficulties. We are Bolsheviks, we have been steeled by Lenin, and we do not run from difficulties, but face them and overcome them. (Voices: "Quite right!" Applause) (The 14th Congress of the RCP(B), Dec 1925)

There was some debate at the 14th Congress about "socialism in one country", but usually in contradistinction to Trotsky's "permanent revolution". The doctrine had grown in the past year and became a valuable popular slogan for the party leaders which actually passed as a resolution at the Congress.

Since Stalin's view on "socialism in one country" had so drastically altered in the span of a few years, and since it passed as a resolution at the 14th Congress in December 1925, Stalin was forced to theoretically justify this change. So, in January 1926, immediately after the Congress, Stalin wrote "On Questions of Leninism", which sought to sum up the discussion during the Congress and laid out what was to become the final form of "socialism in one country", a doctrine that would remain unchanged for many years to come.

Here is Stalin's justification for the change in "socialism in one country":

"But the pamphlet "The Foundations of Leninism" contains a second formulation [of the question of the victory of socialism in one country] which

says:

"But the overthrow of the power of the bourgeoisie and establishment of the power of the proletariat in one country does not yet mean that the complete victory of socialism has been ensured. The principle task of socialism - the organization of socialist production - has still to be fulfilled. Can this task be fulfilled, can the final victory of socialism be achieved in one country, without the joint efforts of the proletarians in several advanced countries? No, it cannot. To overthrow the bourgeoisie the efforts of one country is sufficient; this is proved by the history of our revolution. For the final victory of socialism, for the organization of socialist production, the efforts of one country, particularly of a peasant country like Russia, are insufficient; for that, the efforts of the proletarians of several advanced countries are required." (Foundations, first edition, 1924)

"This second formulation was directed against the assertions of the critics of Leninism, against the Trotskyists, who declared that the dictatorship of the proletariat in one country, in the absence of the victory in other countries, could not "hold out in the face of a conservative Europe".

"To that extent - but only to that extent - this formulation was then (May 1924) adequate, and undoubtedly it was of some service.

"Subsequently, however, when the criticism of Leninism in this sphere had already been overcome in the Party, when a new question had come to the fore - the question of the possibility of building a complete socialist society by the effort of our country, without help from abroad - the second formulation became obviously inadequate, and therefore incorrect." (On Questions of Leninism, Jan 1926)

The passage from Trotsky which Stalin is referring to in order to justify the first edition's formulation of the question comes from Trotsky's comment on the "Slogan for a United States of Europe" article by Lenin. Here is what Trotsky states in regards to Lenin:

"The only more or less historical

argument against the slogan of a United States of Europe was formulated in the Swiss Sotsial-Demokrat [at the time the central organ of the bolsheviks, where Lenin's article was published] in the following sentence: 'uneven economic and political development is an absolute law of capitalism.' From this the Sotsial-Demokrat draws the conclusion that the victory of socialism is possible in one country, and that therefore there is no reason to make the dictatorship of the proletariat in each separate country contingent upon the establishment of a United States of Europe. That capitalist development in different countries is uneven is an absolutely incontrovertible argument. The capitalist level of Britain, Austria, Germany or France is not identical. But in comparison with Africa and Asia all these countries represent capitalist 'Europe', which has grown ripe for socialist revolution. That no country in its struggle must wait for others is an elementary thought which it is useful and necessary to reiterate in order that the idea of concurrent international action may not be replaced by the idea of temporising international action. Without waiting for the others, we begin and continue the struggle nationally, in the full confidence that our initiative will give impetus to the struggle in other countries; but if this should not occur, it would be hopeless to think - as historical experience and theoretical considerations testify - that, for example, a revolutionary Russia could hold out in the face of a conservative Europe, or that a socialist Germany could exist in isolation in a capitalist world."

In the original "Foundations" (April 1924) quoted above, there were two aspects to the question. First, due to the uneven and spasmodic development of capitalism, the victory of a proletarian revolution in one country was perfectly feasible. Under the conditions of imperialism, there is not only a possibility, but a "necessity" for the victory of the proletariat in individual countries. In this first formulation of the question, it is clear Stalin is approaching it from the political side, from the possibility of a victorious revolution, of the possibility of a seizure of power

by the proletariat. This is consistent with Lenin's view.

The second aspect of the question speaks to the possibility of then going on to "organize socialist production". Stalin (in April 1924) stated that this was not possible through the efforts of one country, "particularly of a peasant country like Russia". It is clear that here Stalin is referring to the economic revolution, the material prerequisites of socialism, the possibility of "organizing socialist production". In a peasant country like Russia, this is not possible. This is also consistent with Lenin's view.

But, as quoted above, in "On Questions of Leninism" (January 1926) Stalin states that this second formulation of the question is "inadequate". Stalin here says that the second formulation was directed against those who believed that the dictatorship of the Russian proletariat could not hold out in the face of a capitalist encirclement. It was written at a time when the issue of the relationship of the Soviet government to the outside world was the center of attention. Therefore, says Stalin, now that there is a new question, "the question of the possibility of building a complete socialist society by the efforts of our own country", this second formulation of the question is "inadequate".

But, actually, on closer inspection, it is Stalin's explanation which is inadequate. It is understandable that the intent of the original "Foundations" (April 1924) was to attack the Trotskyists who had no faith in the dictatorship in the presence of a hostile imperialist world. However, the passage which Stalin claims fulfills this purpose has nothing whatsoever to do with this, and, in fact, refers explicitly to "the organization of socialist production" in two separate places.

It is also interesting to note that, in light of the "inadequacy" of the first edition of "The Foundations of Leninism", Stalin also took it upon himself to rewrite the relevant passage. Every subsequent edition of "The Founda-

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On Dave's draft article on "Socialism in one country" and the revision of Leninism"

by Joseph, Detroit
June 29, 1994

Dave's draft article has been sent to some comrades for comments. It's a good effort to put forward views for discussion.

The article condenses his previous report in order to reach an acceptable size, but it thus loses a good deal of the depth of the argument. I don't have the report in front of me while I write this, but I believe it looked at a wide variety of issues, such as a discussion of what the Soviet Union looked like in the 20s, what happened in the 30s, assessment of the industrialization drive and collectivization, particular arguments on whether socialism has to be worldwide, etc. It was an impressive effort. On the other hand, condensing it accentuates certain

problems which are also in the report.

I'd like to put forward some points to promote the consultation on this article. These are my views alone, nor necessarily those of anyone else. And I am not commenting on how the article should be used, but I am writing for the sake of exchanging views on the points of content raised by the article. Undoubtedly thinking about the article will also create more interest in looking at the unpublished material as well as some published articles.

I think the article mixes together different things such as:

Whether socialism could have been constructed in Russia at that time.

Whether socialism could be constructed in any single country or group of countries not embracing the majority

of the world.

What the debate was in the Soviet Union under "socialism in one country", and how the term "socialism in one country" was used by Stalin, as opposed to what the issue is in itself.

What the overall content of Stalin's policy was with respect to socialist construction, etc.

What was the overall experience of the Russian revolution with respect to economic measures.

These issues have to be discussed separately before conclusions about their interconnections can be drawn.

For example, the particular issue that came up in the Soviet Union was the prospects for a revolutionary regime in Russia. It is not whether socialism could be constructed in any individual country, but in the USSR at a particular time in history. The debate between Stalin and Trotsky actually confuses these distinctions and tends to evade concrete issues about Russia with phrasemongering generalities and empty fireworks.

Or an example from Dave's article. It points to 1924 as the "gestation period for the 'socialism in one country' idea", focusing on the statements of Stalin and the Stalin-Trotsky debate, etc. But the issue of what steps of socialist revolution could be taken in Russia with its own forces is implicit in Lenin's discussion of 1917 of why Russia needed a socialist revolution (and he gave concrete discussion of a number of steps), in the steps taken after the October Revolution, etc. So there are different issues here: the assessment of Stalin's views, or of the Stalin-Trotsky debate, on one hand, and on the other hand, the issue of the overall material, both theoretical and practical, from the Soviet Union relevant to the construction of socialism.

Or again, take the question of how the socialist revolution, and its relation to coordinate action in a number of countries, was perceived prior to the

"Socialism in One Country".. Continued from page 6

tions of Leninism" appears with the following revised passage:

"But the overthrow of the power of the bourgeoisie and establishment of the power of the proletariat in one country does not yet mean that the complete victory of socialism has been ensured. After consolidating its power and leading the peasantry in its wake the proletariat of the victorious can and must build a socialist society. But does this not mean that it will thereby achieve the complete and final victory of socialism, i.e., does this mean that with the forces of only one country it can finally consolidate socialism and fully guarantee that country against intervention and, consequently, also against restoration? No, it does not. For this the victory of the revolution in at least several countries is needed. Therefore, the revolution which has been victorious in one country must regard itself not as a self sufficient entity, but as an aid, as a means for hastening the victory of the proletariat in other countries. (Foundations, second edition)

Stalin's attempt to define himself as a consistent Leninist in the face of the Trotskyist opposition falls apart under the weight of his own words. The entire theoretical construct of "socialism in one country" therefore takes as its starting point this fundamental revision of Leninism on the question of internationalism and revolution, on the question of imperialism, on the question of worldwide revolution, on the question of the material prerequisites of socialism. "Socialism in one country" as fleshed out during and after the 14th Congress, is a political line, reflecting the class interests of an emerging bourgeoisie in Russian society. "Socialism in one country" is not consistent with Leninism or the theory and practice of the Bolsheviks concerning the international aspect of the revolution until 1923. It is one of the new foundations of the emerging Soviet elite. Its emergence therefore marks a new period, and possibly a significant turn, in the course of the social revolution originally undertaken in October 1917. □

Russian revolution. This requires looking into the program of the German, French and other social-democrats prior to World War I. It is not solved by early quotes from Marx, nor by looking at one World War I article from Lenin. I think the article and the report are mistaken here, and take as central points of socialist theory certain derivative ideas concerning international prospects, ideas which in the natural course of things will be continually assessed and reassessed.

The various issues have to be examined separately before their interconnections can be made clear. For example, the nature of the state-capitalist order built up under Stalin has to be established by looking directly at it. It is not dependent on the issue of "socialism in one country", which at most could help explain why such a new capitalist order came about. If one isn't clear on this, one's theoretical work might be influenced by the fear that failure to condemn "socialism in one country" means accepting the state-capitalist order. So one's theoretical work on "socialism in one country" would be biased from the start by one's passionate desire to denounce Stalinist oppression.

In fact, one problem with the condensation of the report into this article is that all the factual material and assessments about the state-capitalist order drops out. Instead the issue in Russia appears simply as one of theory, of Stalin's deviation from past views.

I think this approach is not right. The development of state capitalism in the Soviet Union did not come about because of Stalin's mistakes on some general theoretical constructions like "socialism in one country." The opposite is the case. Various theoretical constructions were used to cover over a reality that sprang from definite class relations, from the interconnection of these class relations with developments that decimated and immobilized some classes and gave weight to others, from the development of a new ruling class, and the separation of the regime from the working class. As the revisionist regime resulted from the degeneration of a revolution, it used revolutionary terms to

justify itself: not just "socialism in one country", but "socialism", the "dictatorship of the proletariat or working class", "revolution", "revolutionary violence", "Leninism," "Marxism", etc. It revised all of them. One has to separate a discussion of what the terms in themselves mean, from the analysis of their use by the revisionist regime.

One of the article's views is the distinction between the political power of the working class, a socialist regime, and economic socialism. It basically says that one can have the dictatorship of the proletariat in one country, but not socialism or the organization of socialist production in one country. Socialist production has to cover all or most of the world.

Now, it is true that the proletariat seizes political power in order to use this power to transform the economic relations. Moreover, socialism is built up in steps, not all at once. The report clearly is thinking about these things.

But to identify the transitional steps with the political regime, or political socialism so to speak, and to contrast it with economic socialism, isn't quite right.

With the seizure of power, a socialist regime engages in a series of transitional steps both politically and economically. Even politically, there is the issue of building up a workers' state, actually mobilizing the workers into state functions, etc. This doesn't occur simply because power has been seized; it requires a series of steps by the government and a profound movement by the mass of workers and by the working people generally. At the same time, there must be steps transitional steps economically. The workers will not be interested in a political socialist rule for any length of time without economic measures that clearly diverge from the past economy. To say that these measures aren't the full organization of socialism, and hence are not the organization of socialist production, is to evade an analysis of what's going on.

The issue posed by the Soviet revolution is the variety of steps it took, economically as well as politically, and what role they played. What were revo-

lutionary steps and what backward. What might have worked if the overall situation in Russia hadn't been so backward and which would be wrong in themselves. And this was debated right from the start.

Lenin listed measures in a number of his articles prior to the October Revolution, and regarded this as a necessary part of explaining why socialist revolution was possible in Russia. Far from glossing over the economic issues, he is very concerned by them. He not only refers in the famous article on the United States of Europe to organizing socialist production, but in other articles he develops concrete suggestions for Russia as well.

After the October revolution, there was the attempt to institute gradual nationalization and control of the economy.

This was interrupted by a rapid nationalization and takeover. And then by "war communism" itself.

This was followed by the NEP, involving both a different form of relation with the peasantry and the state capitalist-style measures of the countryside, etc.

Thus there is a variety of economic measures to assess. Dave is aware of these measures, but the article apparently separates them off from the "victory of 'socialism in one country', in all its economic potentialities." This seems to me an artificial separation. And it obscures the key issue that should lie behind discussion of "socialism in an individual country": it is the issue of the transitional steps toward socialism, of whether they create a stable system, of the conditions under which they can be carried out. And this means of the conditions under which there will be class movements of the workers and the people, and not just of conditions for technical measures by the government. The actual issue confronting Stalin and Trotsky (presuming that the regime hadn't already become a solidified state capitalist rather than socialist regime) had a good deal to do with assessing these steps. Their debates, however, often went off into fantasy, into plausibly Marxist-sounding phrases with little relation to the concrete reality, and into high-sounding platitudes—with the so-

cialism in one country debate being, in large part, one of the examples of this. To move forward, one has to deal with the basic issues and thus “outflank” the Stalin-Trotsky debate.

One can and should point out that various transitional steps are not the final classless society, or even the first stage of communist society in the full Marxist sense. But I do not think this answers the issue. We should develop a way of discussing the issue that is an advance over what was done back then. This requires formulating the issue in a way that is more theoretically and practically sound than they did.

If one stays at the level of contrasting proletarian rule and economic socialism in all its potentialities, rather than characterizing the different stages in the transition to socialism and the conditions for them—it tends to downplay the issue that there are economic and social prerequisites for a socialist revolution. I do not recall how this is put in the report. In the article, all that is said is that Lenin was convinced that “this period was the eve of the socialist revolution across the globe.” (Well, I’m not sure exactly how it relates, but the article also says that to extend the idea that a socialist revolution might originate in one country “to a general conclusion about the nature of the revolution in individual countries is inconsistent with Leninism”.)

But what has to be clearly dealt with is the varying type of revolutions immediately facing different countries: socialist revolution, anti-feudal democratic revolution, “pure” national liberation struggle, etc. Lenin himself referred to the different revolutionary currents in the world. Nor did the CI assert that all countries faced socialist revolution immediately.

The nature of the revolution immediately facing a country depends on the internal economic situation. It’s not simply that the proletariat can seize power and hold on until the time is ripe for economic socialism. That seems practically absurd and theoretically an abandonment of materialist theory. Nor, in my opinion, can outside aid substitute for the internal conditions—rather it can only help processes which are inherent in a

country’s internal conditions. (External conditions can at times become decisive, such as a revolution being crushed, or very important—such as external food aid preventing a government having to squeeze the countryside for food. But in all cases, external factors only act on the basis of the social and economic and political factors existing internally. Even when external factors are decisive in determining the outcome of something, the actual results still occur within the possibilities created by the internal conditions.)

Thus the revolutionary proletariat has to judge what the internal economic situation in the country is, the state of the class relations, etc. Only this allows it to know what its revolutionary program is, and whether a socialist revolution can be carried out.

A related issue: can a proletarian power exist for any substantial length of time without having organized production on a basis diverging from the old capitalist basis, even if it is not yet full socialism. Personally I doubt this, and I suspect that the original Marxist theory doubted this as well. Socialist revolution—if it isn’t just a phrase—must mean implementing measures that start on the road to socialism, that go beyond capitalist economics. If a regime holds on without that, can it really remain a proletarian regime?

For example, I don’t think that one can simply combine a proletarian power with a market economy as the main and only economic system. The market economy generates its own forces, petty-bourgeois as well as bourgeois, while disuniting the workers. And if the economy is “socialized” in various ways, include nationalization, the question arises of what this represents, and how these measures resemble or differ from those used in the Soviet Union. These issues cannot be answered simply by contrasting the proletariat state power to economic socialism. They require judging how far certain steps towards socialism can actually be achieved.

And to say that this doesn’t matter, because such steps are not full socialism, is not the issue. Irrespective of how Stalin and Trotsky debated it, it makes little difference to replace “full socialism in

one country” with “partial socialism in one country”. The question is under what conditions can the transition to socialism be maintained. If it can be maintained “in a single country” under certain conditions, then there is the real answer to the question of “socialism in one country”.

As well, I believe that an article that argues on socialism in one country has to directly argue on why socialism has to embrace most of the world, if that is its view. The report gave its views on this, but the article basically just asserts it. To judge it, however, requires looking concretely at the different factors behind it.

Note that the term “one country” is in fact misleading. The question raised by the “socialism in one country” debate was the extent and size of an economy that can maintain socialism. Some countries are ten or one hundred times the size of another country, are equal to ten or even 100 other countries. The USSR was one country back then, and is a dozen today. So the issue is not one country, but the size of economy needed, or whether no size is sufficient in itself, but the economy must embrace most of world production.

So these are some issues about the article on the “socialism in one country” debate that I would like to raise for consideration. <

Answer to Dave

Date: 31-Jul-94 23:07 EDT
by Phil, Seattle

Dear Comrades,

From the outset, I would like to say that I think Comrade Dave from Amherst has done a courageous and necessary thing in coming out with his report "'Socialism in one country' and the Revision of Leninism". As I write what follows, I will try to do it in the spirit of NOT "shooting the messenger", but rather of comradely, constructive criticism, because I think much of what he has said is right, as will become apparent. Nevertheless, as Joseph has already pointed out, the summary which we have all seen accentuates the report's weak points, and I will have to discuss these as I see them without becoming too negative about what is on the whole a positive development. It is all the more positive because this topic is right at the heart of the issues that bedeviled the former MLP, and we, as its successors, must deal with it or perish ourselves.

Certainly, the thesis that revolutionary socialists before Lenin did not foresee that a backward, peasant country like Russia would be the first country to attempt to construct a socialist society is not new. Nor is it new that Lenin himself expected the proletariat from the more advanced capitalist countries to quickly rally to the defense of the Bolshevik Revolution to a greater degree than they did, and that when this failed to materialize, the workers' government in Russia was forced to engage in tactical maneuvers that would have been unthinkable a few years earlier at the apex of the revolutionary upsurge. But Lenin was used to considering these matters in far more depth than those around him, and this was not only true of Stalin, but of Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Bukharin as well (to name just a few of the more prominent figures in post-Lenin Russia).

One of the things that struck me most about this report was how much it paralleled the thinking in Chapter 8 of E.

H. Carr's book "The Russian Revolution From Lenin to Stalin". I am not suggesting plagiarism here. It is very hard to go anywhere in analyzing Soviet history without encountering Carr. In fact, I asked David at the May meeting if he was well acquainted with Carr, and he said he was. In many ways, these parallels are good points about the report because they testify to its historical veracity. However, veracity is not the main point here, because bourgeois historians (Carr included) have made a small industry of veracity for years without advancing us very far from the simplistic vision of Communism Vs. Capitalism on the world stage that has dominated so much of the 20th century. What is needed is an analysis of what the relationship was between the economics of Russia and the politics, and why all the post-Lenin figures of Soviet Russia fell short of the mark in seeing where their country was going and where they were leading the international revolutionary proletariat in the process. And the questions that Joseph raised, and the ones I will raise, are a part of that process which we are only now beginning to deal with. In 1921, after the last battles of the Civil War had been fought, the Russian Communist Party was forced to consider some very difficult answers to a very difficult situation. The previous three and one-half years had seen striking changes in Russian society. Yet for all that, Russia had still remained mostly within the bounds of the system of commodity production. Furthermore, the realization was growing that breaking out of this system was going to be a long, hard process which the initial group of Bolsheviks who led the revolution in 1917 had not foreseen. At this point, Lenin proposed a retreat whose character must have startled many Bolsheviks — he proposed a compromise with capitalism in order to bring about the advances in the Russian economy and society which would be necessary to carry it forward on the road to socialist construction. Remember, at that point, Russia was not yet a socialist country, even though the proletariat held state power. The development of the basis for socialist construction had just begun, and a sober observer could say that

socialism was just beginning to be built in a few sectors of Russian society, and that it existed alongside vast sectors which were held by private capitalism, petty commodity production and patriarchal (natural) economy. It was these remnants of a backward past which were the biggest obstacles needing to be overcome for a further advance of the socialist revolution. And this was uncharted territory here, because neither Marx nor anybody else had seen the need to form a compromise with state capitalism in a situation as unheralded as this.

During the next few years, the NEP was a fundamental feature of Russian and Soviet life. And it became clear that the Russian Communist Party had a great deal to learn here — more than many communists liked to admit. They would much rather make fine speeches, draft resolutions, and carry out campaigns than learn to manage an economy, while the capitalists who worked alongside of them (and frequently assumed the garb and phraseology of communists in the process) outflanked them all along the line. Lenin alone saw this, and warned the Bolsheviks repeatedly of the hard lessons which they failed to absorb. But then his illness silenced him, and after that his death came, and it became easier for factions to form among the bureaucracy and privilege to seduce the cadres, and the hard truth was put aside for easier deceptions that this was already socialism, and that the features of capitalist and pre-capitalist economic relations that were so apparent were best left undiscussed and unanalyzed. So, in the '20s, Russia was still in the main a capitalist country, with strong backward features, that had been through a devastating period of revolution, war and civil war, which was only beginning to rebuild industry, restore agricultural production, rebuild trade (with capitalist countries) and learn to manage an economy. And yet there were socialist institutions, and socialist ideology here, seemingly out of sync with the main body of the economy and the society. In the cities, one could find daycares, women's organizations, community kitchens, worker-managed factories, and many things that seemed to

go a long way towards what was thought of as socialist. Yet there were officials, bureaucrats and managers, who talked like communists and yet had privileges and power that set them apart from the workers who were supposedly the ruling class. There were unions whose role in the state was contradictory — on the one hand, they had to defend the interests of the workers, but on the other hand, they had to cooperate with management to increase production. Money here was subject to the same laws as in the capitalist world, as was commodity production, yet this was not recognized and the fiction was preserved that this was somehow something different, even though Marx had explained quite carefully that these things have their own dynamic, independent of people's will. So it is not at all surprising that under these confusing and contradictory conditions an ideological direction developed which would reconcile seemingly socialist institutions with a fundamentally capitalist economy. What is not so certain is what else could have been done. And this is where Joseph's remarks need to be addressed. I agree that the size of the country has great bearing on the question of socialist construction, as does its degree of industrial development. In fact, I would maintain that it is impossible to carry out the construction of a socialist economy in a country (or a contiguous group of countries) which is not of continental dimensions, without sizeable amounts of foreign aid. And even if this were attempted, considerable clarity would have to exist as to questions dealing with foreign trade with countries that are still capitalist, and that this trade would have to be carried out on a more-or-less capitalist basis. Yet this begs the question, because Russia (and the USSR) were continental in extent, and had many of the resources necessary to fit these criteria (and I may be getting too schematic here). The backwardness of the Russian economy, and the devastation which revolution, war and invasion had left it in, required a prolonged period of restoration using capitalist methods to bring the economy and the society up to a state where socialist transformations could be carried out in more than just a

few cities (or parts of cities). Capitalism is not a stage of history which can be avoided (as the Narodniks thought), and Marx's suggestions that it might be possible to do so bear careful reconsideration when questions of literacy and culture are brought into the picture. Certainly Soviet society would have looked very strange — a government of workers and peasants, just emerging from an illiterate and semi-barbaric past, managing an economy of capitalist institutions side-by-side with socialist ones, for decades until the necessary social changes in the lives of the peasantry and the inhabitants of rural areas could be changed so that capitalism could be eradicated — peacefully??? This is a scenario I find it hard to believe, yet it is the only one possible for bringing about socialism in Russia — certainly a rich field for science fiction, but hardly one where the political thinker feels very comfortable about his link with reality. So, I hope I have lived up to my goals here, and addressed at least some of the questions in a reasonable way. Yes, I would hope that socialism could really have been built as I described, but this is only a hope, and history so far speaks against it. If the foreign capitalists would not have crushed such a society, the domestic ones would certainly have tried, and I wonder how this society could have avoided being some form of police state in the course of all these struggles — certainly the utmost solidarity of the proletariat and progressive sectors of society would have been required, and the internal opposition would have had to tread carefully to avoid overstepping the bounds that the maintenance of order would have required. I would give it a 10% chance — not impossible, but who can say? What Stalin and the other post-Lenin leaders did was far more prosaic than the above science-fiction story, but they were ordinary men a cut below Lenin. It would have taken two or three Lenins to lead a society on such an unlikely path, and history does not endow an age so richly very often.

Yet I would not say, as Fred once said in a discussion in the Seattle study group, that the Bolsheviks should merely have held a free election and abided by

the results. I opposed that view now as I opposed it then. They were duty bound to give the tasks of building socialism their best attempt, and this reconnaissance has been a bequest of great importance to us. The Bolshevik Revolution swept the backwardness of Russian society into the dustbin of history, along with tsarist and white guard trash that deserved no better fate. In its place arose a new legacy whose place in Russian history is still not a settled question. This was a society of state-capitalist bureaucrats disguised as communists, who at first carried out a pell-mell industrialization and collectivization of the USSR in the face of world-wide economic collapse and surprised the world by helping to break the back of the Nazi war machine, then led an empire assembled from parts of the economically underdeveloped world to challenge the hegemony of the US before stagnating and disintegrating due to monstrous mismanagement and imperialist overextension. This is the history which needs more analysis too, not from the standpoint of a "Communist" grand design of world conquest, but from the standpoint of comparatively prosaic imperialist power-politics. And I would think that the result would be much more believable than the accounts the bourgeois historians have developed. ◊

How Marx and Engels....

Continued from page 19

developing countries is a socialist revolution in the developed Western imperialist countries. I consider Michael's view to be profoundly wrong both on Marx and Engels and on the current world situation. As part of developing discussion of these issues, I hope to write on Marx and Engels attitude towards the anti-colonial struggles of their day in a future article. □

Some Points on Phil's Remarks -

by Mark, Detroit
Date: August 9, 1994

Dave (UMass-Amherst) has done a service in kicking off a new round of discussion of what led to the demise of the Soviet revolution. Here I just want to raise a couple points on comrade Phil's remarks of July 31.

I think Phil did well to emphasize the importance of looking at the relationship of the economics of Russia and the politics. It is not enough to just look at what Lenin or Stalin or other Bolsheviks said but we must judge the veracity of what they said against the actual situation. Only in this way can we decide what were just nice revolutionary-sounding phrases and what were politics that could move the transitional Soviet society closer to socialism or whether the objective situation would have doomed all attempts at socialism.

But I think that Phil's theorizing on the Russian revolution has some problems. Phil seems to think that Lenin's concessions to capitalism under the NEP and the plan for the existence of socialist and capitalist elements side by side in that society for a fairly long time show that "capitalism is not a stage of history that can be avoided". Phil thinks Marx's suggestion that it might be possible to do so in Russia should "bear careful reconsideration when questions of literacy and culture are brought into the picture."

Well, the Russian revolution failed to overcome the combined difficulties of backwardness, civil war, imperialist encirclement, etc. Could they have been overcome? Phil thinks not and maybe he is right. But I think it is an unjustified leap to say that the revolution failed because you can't avoid capitalism as a stage of history.

On the eve of the revolution, Russia was a country where capitalism had long existed. Not only was there capitalist industry, but the old communal relations

in the countryside had been shattered and capitalist relations were developing there. Under "normal" capitalist development, the class differentiation would continue to develop, a relative few rich peasant farms would develop at the expense of millions of small holdings. The vast mass of peasantry would go through hell, eventually leave the land and become workers or urban poor. As capitalism further develops, agriculture may reach the point where huge agribusiness monopolies reduce the farming population to a negligible number while rural proletarians work the huge farms and plantations.

The question facing the Bolsheviks then was not whether capitalism could be avoided or not, it was already a fact of life. The issue was whether the proletariat had to wait for capitalism to convert the majority of the peasant masses to proletarians, or whether a victorious revolutionary proletariat could win and maintain support of the peasantry by saving them from the torture of letting capitalist development run its full course. Could the proletariat gradually restrict small peasant production which gives rise to capitalism and ruin of the peasantry? Could the peasant masses become proletarianized without waiting for an entire historical stage of capitalism to do the trick?

I think both Marx/Engels and Lenin thought this was possible. Marx and Engels were the first to describe how the proletariat could implement a policy of gradual, voluntary collectivization of the peasants. (This path of voluntary collectivization was described for countries in Western Europe with more industrial development but where a large peasantry also existed. This issue of Marx and the Narodniks refers to another situation which I shall go into later in these remarks.) As the revolutionary crisis in Russia developed, Lenin too supported the path of voluntary collectivization for the Russian peasantry.

Unfortunately, the policy of volun-

tary collectivization leading to the eventual creation of large state farms never took place. A series of problems arose that forced a retreat from this policy. The severe conditions of War Communism led to antagonisms between the peasantry and the workers' power.

These were eased, but not through the working class providing the organization and material aid needed to collectivize, but through a restricted "free market." When collectivization took place in a big way under Stalin, it took place not at a pace determined by the sentiments of the peasants but by the needs of a developing state-capitalist order.

Is the failure or inability of the Russian revolution to carry out a voluntary collectivization explained by "capitalism is not a stage of history which can be avoided"? Such a conclusion would be merited only if: 1) it was shown that the Russian revolution could not have taken any other course; AND 2) if it is shown that to embark upon a path of voluntary collectivization is generally impossible for the revolution in any country or that voluntary collectivization doesn't work even when implemented.

Based on the research I have seen, I am unsure on point 1. And on point 2, I think the evidence is very weak. The most I could conclude is that sometimes the conditions may prevent the worker-peasant alliance from fully developing. This would call attention to the seriousness of concrete evaluations of the domestic and international factors in evaluating the chances of success of launching a revolutionary onslaught. As well, it raises the issue of possibly having to retreat from power if the regime loses mass support for a protracted period of time.

Now let's get back to the issue of Marx and the Narodniks. The Narodniks thought Russia could skip capitalism and considered the preservation of the old peasant communal relations as desirable. Back in the 1870s Marx also considered the possibility that the communal relations would help Russia bypass a stage of capitalism. He stated that

there was no general law that every society had to go through capitalism. He noted that his theory merely stated that where capitalism began to develop, certain inevitable developments would follow. And, based on studying Russian economic conditions, he declared that Russia of that time, having started down the path of capitalism, was losing the chance of bypassing that stage of development.

This may seem odd because we are used to thinking of socialism developing out of capitalism. But Marx thought that IF the communal relations survived until the European socialist revolution could come to the aid of Russia, maybe the communes could be a form in which the Russian peasantry could make the transition to socialism. So, if capitalist relations have not taken hold, and if the proletariat of the advanced countries can help overcome backwardness, the peasants can avoid the stage of capitalism.

Of course, this scenario never happened. Instead, capitalist relations began to decompose the communal sys-

tem.

From the Narodnik standpoint, this was simply a tragedy. They considered the old village relations their highest ideal. Marx and Engels never shared the Narodniks' romantic attitude toward the old village commune. Even when they thought the old commune forms would be helpful in easing the transition to a new cooperative agriculture, they only thought they would serve the cause of socialism if they were infused with a new content by material aid from a socialist revolution in West Europe. By their own internal means, the old communes would not give rise to socialism.

The Russian Marxists also disagreed with the Narodniks. They felt that trying to patch the communes back together was a worthless venture. For one, there was no force that could stop the development of capitalist relations. Trying to preserve the commune form would have meant simply preserving the form when the content of the commune had already changed. It would thus be shielding the rich peasant exploitation of the poor peasants. The Marxists saw

that the development of capitalism would bring suffering to the peasants but also that the class differentiation would provide the basis for the class struggle in the countryside. The development of this class struggle would help move society toward socialism.

Of course, Phil may disagree about Marx's speculation on a set of circumstances arising where Russia skips capitalism. But Marx also stated that the conditions upon which such a possibility would rest were changing.

In other words, unless a West European revolution and Russian revolution broke out in time, Marx considered the possibility dead. Perhaps Phil has raised the question of whether capitalism can be avoided as a way of implying that even in 1917, Russia was so backward that a socialist revolution was doomed to fail. But this would require a concrete analysis of what the conditions were like in 1917, not simply disagreeing with Marx and Engels' assessment of an earlier era. A general prescription like "capitalism is not a stage of history which can be avoided" will not answer that question. □

Transcript of discussion at the Fourth Congress of the MLP which touched on the topic of "Socialism in One Country", Nov., 1992

speaking,
Michael, Detroit:

<...> ...So I don't know if I will answer any... The first point I want to make is the idea that any country, no matter what its size or what its economy, how poor it is, how underdeveloped it is, how backward it is, can build socialism by itself through self-reliance, Juche or whatever various other slogans have been advanced is a relatively recent phenomenon, <...> especially in the period of time of the 50s and 60s. The Chinese, the Albanians, the Koreans and the Cubans and so forth promoted this thing. Looking back on this idea of the day — and I think in our own literature too you will find this phenomenon — looking back on this phenomenon today... looking from the current events of the world, one has to instead acknowledge that this idea turns out to be a myth.

For instance Albania did not build

socialism by itself. To whatever extent it had economic development, a large part of that, a good portion of that was assistance from the Soviet Union in one period and China in another period. The Koreans talked about self-reliance and Juche while hiding from the world that they were going billions of dollars into debt. And also getting Chinese and Soviet aid. Today the Cubans are trying to uphold the idea that they will build socialism in one tiny island in the Caribbean with bicycles and oxcarts and austerity at the same time as they are opening their doors to try with markets and investments...

But the biggest phenomenon is a relatively recent phenomenon and as it turns out is contradicted by actual events in the world. In Manny's report the point is made that a earlier generation of Marxists really did not conceive of such a thing. Even in the early days of the CI the

issue was raised that backward countries may have possibilities to bypass capitalist development only with the assistance of advanced proletarian power. It was one of the bases... It was one idea that was put forward. And other ideas that existed — this issue had been discussed historically in the Marxist and revolutionary movement. There was an exchange between Marx and various Russians in the last century hypothesizing whether or not a transition to socialism bypassing capitalism was possible on the basis of the old Russian commune. The debate was started as it might be one of the possibilities. So that's the second point. This idea is a relatively new phenomenon. Earlier it was just not...

And the third point I want to make is on the question of the Russian revolution. Various of this discussion took place earlier. I just wanted to note one

thing on the Russian revolution. The Bolsheviks and the Russian Marxists had a lot of discussion about lots of theoretical issues from the early 1890s to the time the revolution took place. Until 1917, none of the Marxists in Russia had seriously contemplated the possibility of a transition to socialism. The Bolshevik party was not based on the idea and a great deal of theoretical work and understanding of the meaning about the idea that socialist transition was an immediate task. It simply had not been discussed. They were prepared for a democratic revolution against the Czar. They thought that there would be no Chinese wall but they really didn't develop that...how the transition would take place. So what actually turns out in that period of time they carry it out on the basis of a generally rough idea and — anyway, it took various course. I didn't really want to get into that. Simply that this had been not considered a possibility.

Once the Russian revolution, when it took place it was very much linked up with the idea that not only that there was a revolutionary crisis affecting all of Europe, but they had certain expectations of the assistance in Europe. Once that did not take place then they were faced with what can you do and so forth. And that discussion has certain interest. It only went so <far>. Of course our investigation and our research on the course of the Russian revolution will give us various, and also already has raised, certain questions and will give us hopefully some answers. But ipso facto there are no existing answers. So the point on those points is that both Marxist theory and the history of the revolutionary movement and the attempts at socialism or even what various people may have considered socialism into account.

So what are the issues here on the question of socialism and whether it's possible to build socialism in backward countries, in a single country and these related issues. There's actually a whole different series of realms of issues here. There is issues very particular to small countries. There's issues with respect to the backwardness or undevelopment or lack of development. And of course if you are a small and undeveloped country it is pretty much — the world is pretty

much stacked against you as far as what you can do by yourself without the assistance you need from outside in terms of building socialism.

So then one realm of questions is about smallness. Smallness is a real issue... There's a question about how much of an economy can you build on your own. Issues of economy of scale, issue of the size of your home market. All these are actual issues.

Underdevelopment raises issues of both the economic capacity of the country as well as the size of the proletariat, the socialization of the proletariat, the organizational capacity of the proletariat and so forth. With respect to that, for instance, I remember a discussion with revolutionaries in Bangladesh. We were discussing about the question of socialism or — and they would say we can't have socialism here because although we have capitalist relations, there's hardly any socialization of labor. And so their conclusion was...ipso facto democratic revolution and so forth which is not exactly true. But nevertheless they raised these issues. Just telling them to go to socialism in Bangladesh sounded to them like utopia...

There's issues outside the realm of backwardness, touched upon here, in the developed countries. And this is another realm of the question of socialism in one country. Which is whether or not, how the world capitalist market impinges on you, what it will allow you if you are isolated for a period of time. Whether they can eventually squeeze the life out of you. That's another realm of questions. So a series of issues, concrete issues. With some of the smaller and underdeveloped countries it's very obvious. Socialism must begin with taking over the commanding heights of these economies. In many of these countries the commanding heights of the economy are not within the borders of these countries, they are elsewhere. You can rearrange the musical chairs but you can't get very far on your own.

So this raises a series of theoretical issues that have to be looked at and answered with the understanding that we don't want to be utopian. The people are not going to take us seriously if we tell them they can just build socialism in any

condition. Forget about the facts the world raises both in terms of its realities as well as the history.

So I want to raise a few issues...on this question. One is, whether or not it is possible to build socialism in one country, backward country and so forth is not ipso facto the same question as whether or not the revolution in a certain country is socialist revolution or democratic revolution or what. That's not the same question. But it does raise the question that wherever the issue of socialist revolution is posed, then it has to be posed in a very strong way linked to the international dimension of the question. That the possibilities of building socialism in any country require that building an international movement of socialist workers is actually a practical task linked to the question. It's not some abstract question that, oh, we will have socialist revolution here and it will give rise to some crisis elsewhere. You have to be working in a context where there is a world — or wider socialist movement. Then in Russia, one of the reasons it was considered a possibility was there was a wide international socialist movement. It was not in the absence <...> we can spark another crisis. That's not the way it came up.

So then the question comes up, if in a certain country you really do not think the economic possibilities exist for socialism, what should you or should you not do, given a revolutionary crisis on your hands. What does a workers' party do? I'm not trying to give a definitive answer on this but I don't think the issue is in any country <where> you're in state power you go on holding that. Because if really the possibilities do not exist, whether you like it or not, you may try to implement what you think is socialism, you will unwittingly become the agency of capitalistic relations. And you will become the slavedrivers of the new society. Faced with that prospect, the workers' party should not contemplate taking power and trying to embark on such a crusade — which would make it the enemy of the very class it originally started — based on.

Another question comes up, if your revolution breaks up, what do you do? There's a variety of possibilities. Even if your analysis is that you would like to

make a socialist revolution, other types of revolutions do take place. It doesn't ipso facto mean democratic revolution cannot take place. In fact they continue to take place around us. Taking place last century and it continues. And so a workers' party does have a task. And it might even involve certain governmental tasks which you cannot rule out, which is not the same thing as whether or not you can <implement> socialism.

Another point on this is that there may come times when you take power; there's no other alternative. Retreats may very well be necessary. Sometimes you may not want state power even when certain conditions exist. Sometimes retreats may be necessary where you will have to give up power even if the cost — it can be a very costly thing you face. I would like to raise Marx's attitude toward the Paris Commune in that regard. Marx did not think that the Parisian workers should rise up and try to seize power. Once they took power and once they rose up he supported it. It had actually taken place in fact. And he tried to give them some advice. Years later in summing it up he made one point. That it wasn't really possible. The best thing they could have done was to make a deal with Versailles. It was the furthest they could go in terms of various democratic conditions and they could have used their political power and took over the bank for that purpose. So it's not unknown in history that you might — this question, it's not like it's the first time it's ever been posed. Sometimes, even despite your best wishes and so forth, the workers' party might be faced with a certain situation where it takes power and it goes a certain way. But the possibilities don't exist, or things you expected don't happen that way in the world and you might be forced into a retreat.

So what actually happened if the Parisian workers would have tried to make a deal with Versailles? We can hardly say. It might have meant a lot of bloodshed as well. You can't rule it out. But...

(Interruption... Michael says this is about all that he has.)

Matt: "Anticlimax. You have to

work on your endings."

Dave, NY:

What was the big discussion about that I didn't hear? How did this thing evolve outside of the fact a mention was made of Manny's report?

(Some procedural discussion takes place. Then some banter.)

Floor:

Here's what I'm confused about on this. I've always heard that it is the trotskyites who say...about socialism in one country. I don't know a lot about the theory, what is that, how is that, what does it have in common or not in common with what Michael just said.

Jake, Chicago:

It's true it's a basic tenet, almost a linchpin of Trotskyism, that you can't have socialism in one country. It's my understanding it's interpreted differently by different groups. And I've been getting from sort of left-wing Trots heated denials that Trotsky ever said the revolution wasn't possible. And that our critique of it often comes down to you say socialism is impossible in one country, well, that means you'll never get there. Because a revolutionary crisis isn't necessarily going to develop in a series of countries. In fact it's more likely you're going to have an uprising in one place before you have it in another. And what are you going to do? Are you going to wait till its simultaneous? And our critique I remember is well you guys want the whole world to wait until you're all ready to go at one jump and that will never happen. But I think that's a gross misjudgment of what the position is in the Trot literature. It's more varied than that. And one Trot who's actually working with us is insisting that has nothing to do with what Trotsky was about. Personally I don't believe it. I haven't had a chance to look into this. But I think there definitely is an aspect of various Trot groups' propaganda that socialism in one country means socialist revolution is deformed, therefore you should have a democratic revolution or something else, or not a socialist revolution. And I think that some groups do use it as an excuse for not having a socialist

revolution.

Other Trot groups use it as a full-blown explanation of everything that was wrong in the Russian revolution. It was the reactionary theory of socialism in one country, and every single mistake that happened under the Bolsheviks, under Stalin, under Kosygin and Brezhnev, stems from that theory.

Everything wrong with Soviet foreign policy stems from that theory. And for them it's a complete explanation. I've never gotten from any of these groups what the Bolsheviks actually should have done. And the last time we had — I guess it was a year and a half ago or two years ago with the Sparts — last year — and we had a debate with them. And one of the things comes out, the socialist revolution in one country is not possible.... OK, so what should the Bolsheviks have done? They should have built the world communist party. OK, then what? Well it will lead revolution. And that's as far as they got.

Ray, Seattle:

As far as the original views of the old man, if you read some of his followers writings... Leon had a few remarks in the course of his career about the possibility of the Russian revolution assuming a socialist course. But in the main, he did not participate in a discussion of these issues until the 1920s along with the rest of the Russian movement. When the discussion broke out in the Russian movement, as far as my memory goes in the fall of 1924, it wasn't really a discussion of the issue. A discussion of the issue would have entailed is socialism possible in our country, not any country in the abstract but in Russia of 1924. And to discuss this issue would have involved discussing, well, what is our conception of socialism. What do we mean by socialist society? What are the economic prerequisites for achieving it and what are some of the economic mileposts and political mileposts along the way toward achieving it?

But instead of having a discussion which actually discussed concretely this issue, what you had was a quote fight where Leon would accumulate—in addition in '25 Zinoviev and the other guy, Kamenev—had accumulated pages

upon pages upon pages of quotations from Lenin which consisted of remarks about the anticipation of a European-wide crisis that would come to the assistance of a Russian revolution and the revolution <...>, a revolution against the Czar. And so he would draw the conclusion and say the Leninist conception was always to anticipate the Russian revolution in the context of the assistance of the European revolution. And then the reply from Stalin and with his group was no, look in 1915 Lenin said there can be socialism in one country—after a successful revolution in one European country it would perhaps come to the aid of revolutions that broke out in surrounding countries and even send troops and so forth. And then in 1923 Lenin said well, maybe with cooperatives in agriculture we can go to socialism on the basis of our own efforts.

What both left out was that, also in 1923 Lenin said that we don't know what the material basis for socialism is. We don't know whether we have it.

Which would certainly throw doubt on any ideas that Lenin had the conclu-

sive view that it was or was not possible. None of them would touch that point. But the point I'm making is they weren't actually discussing the issue; they were in a quote fight. Because what they were fighting over in many respects was it was a factional struggle over who was the true inheritor of Lenin —<...> leadership. So you had incredibly empty discussion. As far as a word of content you can find in Trotsky's writings on this subject, the most I can see is his phrasemongering about world trade. There's a lot of world trade. Countries are interdependent in terms of it, so therefore, obviously, socialism is not possible in one country. Well, is there anything more Leon? No—world trade! It's obvious! And that's pretty much the level of discussion.

Now as far as what various Trotskyist groups do with that whole issue today, there's a whole myriad of things that come up and Jake described a few of them.

Manny, NY:

My feeling is that the discussion has gone about as far as it is going to go

at this time. We've covered this point for a number of hours now. A fairly wide...set of different views and approaches have come out.... This is essentially our first discussion on the matter. And the point I wanted to make was the question of where does it go from here. I do not think that it is possible or necessary or desirable for us to somehow attempt in this session to sum up the past eight hours of discussion. To try to chart a course for following up on this question, to re-examine and analyze the questions that came up in the discussion will take a fair amount of work. Moreover, it will have to be done in the context that, as Slim will be telling us after dinner, we have a number of other fronts we have to dealing with and only a limited capacity to deal with them. The point I am trying to make is that how the discussion is going to be followed up on is a problem of the Congress.

(The discussion ends here.) □

An open letter that wants to close minds

-part one-

On May 2 Michael appealed to comrades to sign his open letter against the minority. It's basically an appeal to people not to listen to dissenters from the views of the former Central Committee majority.

The tragedy of the Marxist-Leninist Party is of interest to a number of activists the world over. The MLP and its predecessors worked 25 years to rebuild a genuine communist party, and to revitalize Marxism-Leninism on an anti-revisionist basis. Yet when revisionist regimes collapsed around the world, this was not taken by the CC majority as a confirmation of our anti-revisionist views. Instead the MLP's anti-revisionist work was paralyzed, and the MLP itself collapsed.

Does Michael wish to address himself to these issues in his Open Letter?

No. Michael felt that the brief compromise statement prior to the dissolution of the MLP by the Fourth Plenum of the CC was a sufficient announcement to the world.

Is Michael excited about theoretical views which he breathlessly wishes to communicate to the world?

No. All the Open Letter says is that there are questions on everything.

Instead, Michael and the former CC majority are offended by the fact that there are dissenters who question their views, and outraged that these dissenters published their views. The Open Letter is a plea to the world not to listen to the dissenters. Throwing aside the smallest shred of decency or even of intellectual curiosity, it denounces any dissent as the work of religious "true believers" and splitters.

The letter complains to the world the former CC majority and its support-

ers and new ideologues, such as Ben and Fred in Seattle, have been maligned. This spirit of hurt feelings pervades the letter. Those who no longer see the point of building an anti-revisionist movement are upset that others continue to work to this end. They regard the views and activity of these others as a standing reproach to them. Therefore they must discredit all those with different views.

The Open Letter makes a pretense of wanting to restore fairness. Yet somehow it finds it despicable that the minority actually published its views—and Michael didn't have the decency to point out that the minority published and circulated by its own efforts various of the key reports and articles of the former CC majority and its new ideologues. Well, if the former CC majority really wishes that the comrades on the old Workers' Advocate mailing list be able to ponder the issues, then it should take a leaf from the

minority. It should encourage those on the mailing list to see both sides and judge for themselves. I propose that Michael send out his Open Letter along with some representative material from the minority. For example, he could accompany his Open Letter with comrade Julie's recent statement, dated May 1, which gives her views on what has been shown by the debate since the MLP dissolved, and with comrade Mark's article on cartels and other forms of monopoly association (Detroit #33), which shows some of the investigation of the minority. Then everyone could judge for themselves whether the dissenters are religious or whether they have a scientific approach and question the majority views based on their own study of and thought about the realities of the present world.

The Open Letter is not the first attempt by the former CC majority to end discussion, and it won't be the last. At the Fourth Congress, comrade Jim complained of all the time taken on the inner-party controversy. At the Fifth Congress, comrades Michael, Jim and Manny spearheaded the defeat of a "temporary journal" which would have been open to all comrades in the former MLP circles, would have carried the continuing discussion, promoted news about post-party projects, made public past theoretical work and other useful unpublished materials, etc. and thus encouraged further political and theoretical thought. They said that if anyone wanted to publish their views, let them do it themselves. But what happened when the minority took them up on this? They were outraged. The Feb. 5 Statement of the Boston Communist Study Group (Boston #5, printed in CWV TJ, no. 2) complained bitterly about the publication of what is now called the Chicago Workers Voice Theoretical Journal. And now Michael wants comrades to sign on the dotted line and pledge not to listen to the minority.

But let's look at the content of the Open Letter. I realize that what I write will hardly get to anyone before they decide on whether to sign or not. But truth has a way of making itself known, no matter how many times the dissenters are banned, no matter how many people are bulldozed into throwing stones at them,

no matter how many times the tyrants of the spirit declare that they have judged and condemned the common-people for their independent action and disrespectful tone.

Anti-revisionism

First and foremost, it strikes the eye that the Open Letter seeks to bury the issue of anti-revisionism. Borrowing one of the weakest points of the resolution of the 4th plenum of the CC, the open letter describes the work of the MLP (and predecessors) as simply the project to build a working class party. In fact, the publications of the MLP and its predecessors over and over talked of rebuilding a genuine communist party. And adherence to the MLP or its predecessors required a belief that the revisionist parties were corrupt travesties having nothing to do with Marxism or communism.

In fact, there are many parties and organizations that have some working class support and that call themselves working class associations. Are they all truly working class and do they exhaust what the working class need? Or is Fred (Seattle) right that one cannot distinguish the true interests of the working class from whatever happens to be popular among the workers at the time, in which case there have always been a myriad of working class parties around? The MLP was not just any type of working class party, but based on a particular view of the relationship of workers to class struggle and to societal change. And the essence of its work was in large part the attempt to revitalize Marxism through carrying through the anti-revisionist critique, both in theory and—by carrying out revolutionary work under adverse circumstances—in practice.

Did the MLP give up on anti-revisionism? If so, if it was a principled party, it should have dissolved even if its apparatus was humming along like a well-oiled machine. And anyone discussing its dissolution should trumpet this issue to the skies. If not, why doesn't the Open Letter even mention anti-revisionism?

All the Open Letter says is "The problems of socialist theory that the MLP began to finally worry over could no longer be simply traced to the doorstep of

easily identifiable trends of revisionism." (p.6)

Well, does this mean that Michael and the signers of the Open Letter don't believe that the concept of revisionism is a useful concept any more? But don't worry, I'm sure that, before you sign, there will be those who tell you that it only means that we must go beyond "easily identifiable trends of revisionism" to, well, to what? It doesn't matter what, the whole point is to be obscure. And after the Open Letter is out, the former CC majority will then cite it to mean whatever they please.

And this is one of the biggest faults of the Open Letter. Workers and activists need clarity, whether as a basis for research into troubling questions or as a basis for action. When the letter evades central issues upon which the evaluation of Marxism depend, it is doing a profound disservice to the movement.

As a matter of fact, a number of the prospective signers have given up on the concept of anti-revisionism. Fred has been denying it since 1991, and Michael is close to Fred on this point. Meanwhile Joe in Boston gives a roundabout defense of Fred's speculations about Stalinist-style society being "progressive" although based on the oppression of the majority.

If the Open Letter discussed its questions about anti-revisionism seriously and directly, then it would perform a service no matter what its views were. But by hiding this question under the rug, it talks on and on for the sake of saying nothing.

I say anti-revisionism, but the same point could be made about communism. The Open Letter has the same ambiguity about communism as anti-revisionism. Back in 1991, it turned out that some among us didn't regard "workers' communism" as a way of popularizing that only anti-revisionist communism was real communism, but distinguished "workers' communism" from "communism" and wanted the MLP to declare itself some type of trend other than communism. (Today of course it is doubtful that they would call it "workers' communism".) And indeed the attitude towards communism and towards anti-revisionism is closely related—why would anyone want to be a communist in any sense but the

anti-revisionist one?

If you want to sign the Open Letter, decide for yourself the issue of anti-revisionism. When you leave your name on the historical record, make sure you leave the statement you want to make about anti-revisionism and communism.

How to deal with “dissent and troubling questions”?

Michael’s Open Letter revolves not around a careful discussion of any of the theoretical and political issues, but around the question of dissent. The letter is a response to dissent, and shows his view of how to deal with it. He also raises in the course of the letter that one issue about the MLP is “how did it deal with dissent and troubling questions”? Well, Michael is a member of the former CC majority, and let’s see how he and they are dealing with dissent and troubling questions.

The response of Michael, the former CC majority, and its bosom buddies Fred and Ben, has been to orchestrate a prolonged campaign of vilification on a scale the MLP had never seen before even on its bad days. Theoretical questions are set aside on the grounds that they are just “questions”, political distinctions are declared religious and vile, while character assassination has become their order of the day.

This is not, however, something the MLP has never seen at all. The MLP was born in the midst of an astonishing campaign of vilification and intimidation by Hardial Bains and the leadership of the CP of Canada (ML). Hardial wrote dozens of pages of vituperation and labeled the MLP as the theorists of ideological struggle, the movement, and campaigns. And now, as the MLP dissolved, the circle has turned, and once again we see such a vilification campaign, this time orchestrated by the former CC majority along with Fred and Ben in Seattle. Even some of the slogans are the same, and “ideological struggle” is again suspect, while the denigration of activism and the united front syndrome is reminiscent of the talk against “movements and campaigns”.

The Open Letter continues this campaign of vilification. Its very existence is a declaration that fighting the minority is

the most important thing to declare to the world. Not theory, not proposals for future work, but vilifying the minority is what spurred the former CC majority to see that it couldn’t just leave things at the vague compromise resolution of the Fourth Plenum.

The Open Letter ridicules the idea of ideological differences in every way it can think of. It talks of “nasty ideas”, of “true believers”, of “twisted polemics”, of “simply reinforcing existing preconceptions without substantive investigation”.

However, the Open Letter is somewhat diplomatic. It endorses the vilification campaign against the minority, but doesn’t give the reader the full flavor of this campaign. What haven’t the minority been called? Biospherians, religious, bozo blackmailers, thought cops, intimidators, intimidatees, box dwellers, pitbulls, Stalinists, etc. And there was Ben, who “offers to kick Tim’s ass” (Seattle #25 and #42). And who also issued a call to have comrades tell me to “go to hell”, and fills page after page with vituperation combined with the appeal to believe in his speculations because someone will show, a few years down the road from now, that they are right. Meanwhile Joe (Boston) endorses Ben’s campaign openly and talks of how much he’s learned from it, while Michael spurred it on behind the scenes.

The Open Letter diplomatically refrains from discussing this campaign of character assassination. Nevertheless, the Open Letter claims to put forward a general picture of how relations between the former CC majority and the dissenters have been going. So if you sign the Open Letter, you are endorsing not just the particular slur words in the Open Letter, but the whole lynch-mob campaign.

Oh yes, Michael smugly pontificates in the open letter about being for “an atmosphere of sober-minded thought and reasoned discussion” (p. 10) and that he is worried about “the striving for total ideological-political uniformity” (p. 5) No. He’s not for uniformity. You can have any opinion you like, just so long as you kick the ass of the dissenters.

The former CC majority, Ben and Fred have adopted have the method of heavy-handed revisionist bureaucracy.

Dissenters are to be pilloried. The privileged elite declares that it is the repository of all virtue, including tolerance, open-mindedness, the ability to think, the willingness to debate all comers, etc. And anyone who doubts that is told to go to hell.

When you decide whether to sign the Open Letter, consider for yourself. Do you want to be known before the whole world as someone who treats political differences this way?

The split

Let me give one more example of how the Open Letter treats dissenters. While the letter ignores their views on issue after issue, it states that the Chicago statement of Dec. 13 of last year “regrett(ed) that a split didn’t take place earlier...” (p. 2) Michael is so taken with this formulation that he amplifies it again at the end of his letter. He states:

“In effect, Chicago is rationalizing a retrospective split. It even says that it would have been preferable to have a split at the 4th Congress in 1992.” (p. 9)

This is the important thing that Michael wants to tell the world. The dissenters supposedly haven’t raised any issue of substance—they just want a split.

But what did the Dec. 13 statement actually say? It stated that “It would have been better if it had been possible to have the fight over the most important questions at the 4th congress, even if the party had split.”

Well, what do you know. It doesn’t call for a split, but for a “fight” over the important issues. It simply said that not even the possibility of a party split should have frightened comrades away from looking at the political issues that we were facing.

Thus Michael has, in effect, simply lied about what the dissenters wanted. So much for Michael’s big show of fairness and setting the historical record straight. Copying the time-worn methods of revisionist hacks, he accuses the anti-revisionists of splittism.

But why did the Chicago statement even mention the word “split”? It may be because some comrades were indeed frightened at the 4th congress by the

sharp differences that peeked out at that time. For that matter, the CC itself had, during the party crisis preceding the 4th Congress, discussed the possibility of the party fragmenting. The CC should have helped comrades to see the importance of discussion of the controversial issues. It should have led the party to ponder that political unity should be based on principle, and is not necessarily forever. It can happen that activists can unite and divide and unite again. The attempt to ensure unity by avoiding discussion on the key issues will not ensure unity in the long run, but will harm the revolutionary consciousness essential for communist work. But some CC members didn't want to have to defend their views, and they wanted a respite in the party-wide discussion of the controversial issues—the rank-and-file should just shut up and be confident that, in the years to come, the brilliance of the CC majority will be vindicated.

Moreover, Michael's shouting about splittism displays a bad conscience. While Michael sanctimoniously tells the world that the Chicago comrades are just eating themselves up over the lack of a split, he himself is urging a split. He advocates it to sympathetic thinkers and encourages every step in that direction. He lauded the excesses of Ben, "the ass kicker" of Seattle. And his Open Letter is a public attempt to commit comrades to this split, although without directly using the word "split".

After all, if one has signed a statement demanding that the whole world stop listening to the dissenters, is it logical that one oneself should ponder their views or continue to have relations with them?

When you sign the Open Letter, consider for yourself. Do you want to associate yourselves with such sectarianism and hypocrisy about splittism?

A few fragments

Michael's open letter declares that the dissenters are "the former Chicago branch" and a "few fragments of other former local organizations of the MLP" (including the whole Los Angeles group, which he presumably defines as a mere "fragment" of the Bay Area). Well, ideas

can be valuable even if put forward by only one person. That's what science shows. But the former CC majority, since it refuses to discuss the ideas of the minority, appeals to authority. There is the authority of being in the majority at the Fifth Congress, or the authority of having been leaders of the late MLP, or the authority of arguing against mere "fragments", or the authority of Michael's view of what the Fourth Plenum of the CC supposedly meant to say.

So Michael, who is so anxious to give numerical figures for everything, neglects to mention the overall figures for the minority. In fact, as much as anyone can tell, about one-third of the comrades in the former party circles disagree with the views of the former CC majority.

A rough estimate of the division among the MLP circles can be seen in the debate over the temporary journal at the Fifth Congress. If one is going to "set some of the historical record straight" about "how the MLP died", as the Open Letter claims, one can't discuss the Fifth Congress while ignoring the main debate in which the different tendencies in the party fought—the debate over the temporary journal. Yet the Open Letter, so meticulous to give statistics about everything, ignores this debate and the voting statistics on it. It doesn't explain to the world what would have been so bad about having a journal open to everyone, nor does it discuss the voting results.

This debate and the vote give a rough picture of the various ideas among comrades. I will go into this in more detail in a future article. For now, it suffices to point out that the one-third of the party at every level, from the Central Committee to the sympathizers, dissented from the policy of the former CC majority. These comrades are scattered in cities across the country. They have vastly different experiences in life, in revolutionary work, and with the MLP. They were never linked together as a whole prior to the debate over dissolution, and it was the defeat of the temporary journal that cemented them together.

You might think that the former CC majority, with their experience as leaders pledged to represent and direct an activ-

ist political party, would be so used to pondering the views of the membership that they would automatically seek to discuss the views of such a widespread section of the party. You might think that they might even be used to pondering the views of individual members. But apparently they mainly got use to thinking of themselves as an elite, not subject to the norms of party life which they administered for others. Apparently there are different ideas about what being on a Central Committee means.

In future articles I will go into more about the ideological differences; the scientific method versus appeals to authority as the way to discuss issues; the course of the debate at the Fifth Congress; what the resolution of the Fourth Plenum actually said; the course of the party crisis; and other issues raised by the Open Letter. □

How Marx and Engels.....

Continued from page 37

believe that the tremendous crisis in Africa or other parts of the world are to be solved by wishing for capitalist development? Didn't the inherent contradictions of capitalism bring us, on the one hand, the computer revolution, medicines produced by genetic engineering, and robot factories along with poverty, disease, and the immense migration of peoples, on the other? Are we now to expect that a little tinkering will bring us one without the other? Should we hail the wonders of capitalist development as the path forward for the masses in the dependent countries? Or should we judge one of capitalism's historical roles to be that of developing the conditions and the forces for its transition into socialism? Should we continue the critique of capitalism?

I would also note in ending that Michael has said that Marx and Engels did not consider the anti-colonial struggles of their time as of much significance. This assessment he has used to justify a view that the only hope for the

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CRITICAL NOTES — REPLY TO THE SFBA/BOSTON “OPEN LETTER” POSTED 6/21/94

by NC, Los Angeles
June 29, 1994

This latest “Open Letter” of the SFBA/Boston group should be studied. It is actually a study of the political bankruptcy of this White Towel Gang in their own words. Maybe it should be retitled “Hoist by our own petard.” A sprinkling of historical truths are used to disguise and smuggle in half-truths and outright falsifications. A clever albeit bourgeois method!

The Chicago Branch and the active Detroiters are their main targets. The letter claims Chicago is in a state of denial of the objective situation. This is a cover-up. The December 13, 1993 Chicago statement on dissolution, and more recent statements of the Chicago comrades, argue both subjective as well as objective factors combined to wreck the MLP project. I urge comrades to read for themselves the Chicago viewpoints in the CWV Journals #1, 2 and 3 (which also carries opposition articles).

Only a handful claimed by Nov. 1993 that the MLP could still be sustained as a national Marxist organization. This was probably mostly wishful thinking - hardly a mortal political sin. These comrades want to stay in the trenches to fight on. At some lower level of organization temporarily. This is retreat, but not practical surrender, as was planned by the CC majority and their allies. The Open Letter frames the 5th Congress possibilities as MLP or nothing. This proved very undialectical thinking - as shown since by the heroic deeds

of Chicago, the “Struggle” Detroiters, and the small fractions in other cities, who continue to be Marxists and have not deserted the working class cause.

The CWV journal already has published 3 issues to date. From study more can be gleaned, not only about the history of the MLP, but burning issues of the class struggles on the political, ideological, and philosophical plane as well! In fact, in the CWV journal “majority” oppositionists have had articles printed verbatim - and critiqued. This is an honest way of polemic. Comrades, compare the CWV method with the shameless method of the SFBA/Boston crew. Their 5/2/94 letter demanding signatures to prove fealty to their capitulator views, and now this “Open Letter” (6/21/94) with its many distortions of history (cleverly covered by a bit of factual information), show their political methodology. Comrades, compare the political openness and honesty of the Chicago Branch, Detroit (and L.A.) fractions and our allies, to debate while continuing active (though paced and scaled back) work in the class to the suffocating and demoralized methods of the authors of this Open Letter! With their tactic of loyalty oath thru signature, who is really using the method that demands “true believers?”

Page 4 of the letter puts forward a most outrageous distortion. It claims that Chicago-Detroit & Co. exposures of (Jim’s, Manny’s and Joe’s) softness and humanitarian sugar-coating of the present-day imperialism was distorted to imply that they deny the very exist-

ence of imperialism.

But the Chicago-Detroit polemics against Jim’s/Joe’s conclusions about the period are critiques of one-sidedness, their economism, worship of the market, and almost metaphysical denial and slurring over the politics, militarism and ideology supporting imperialism. Having been jolted by these exposures, the “Open Letter” tries to distort the issue ever more. Lastly, yet another contradiction in this “Open Letter.” On page 4, the letter’s authors claim that they are all for debate, but accuse others (i.e., those exposing their defeatist views) of “twisted polemics,” “mischaracterization,” etc. But on page 6, it seems their master debater (pun intended) mask has fallen off. “No amount of retrospective ideological battles can advance the work on these questions one iota.” (My emphasis - N.C.)

So they are masters of debate (with their own views), but whine when others, the CWV journal, Struggle magazine, etc., expose their fallacies and demoralized views.

This is a period of reflux in U.S. class struggles, of rethinking problems in our theory and practice, of “relentlessly criticizing ourselves,” to paraphrase Marx. We can do better than the authors of this “Open Letter,” who demand fealty for their demoralized views thru signatures, while condemning others for employing a qualitatively more honest and open method of political debate. □

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WHAT CAN BE LEARNED FROM THE BLOODBATH REGARDING APPROACHES TO INVESTIGATION?

CONTINUED.

by Fred, Seattle, 3-23-94

III. Thoughts on a framework for investigation

A. historical perspective

Various areas are sorting out their investigation work. Subjects are being chosen for planned and focused study. I agree that pursuing this sort of work and topics is useful; my suggestion could be summed up with the point that a broader range of topics needs to be looked at. This sounds like no big deal. Why would someone need to write an article about this? The reason is to bring out the divergence of viewpoints (roughly, between the middle section of x-mlp groups and the Seattle study group) on how deep the theoretical crisis is that we face. The different opinions on the scope of investigation are a manifestation of these different outlooks. If one starts to get a hint of the depth of the crisis, then the need for a broad scope of study becomes apparent.

What is this "theoretical crisis of Marxism" that all of our x-mlp trends talk about? (For the icon people, its predominant feature is that people don't believe in Marxism anymore; it is a crisis of doubt, a faltering of faith, backsliding. Corresponding to this assessment is an approach to investigation that subordinates it to the aim of finding some remaining icons that can be saved.)

The rest of us basically consider that our theory doesn't answer some important questions, and it is unclear where and how fundamental, the generality or errors are. And we are agreed, I think, whether others have stated so or not, that we have difficulties grasping processes of contemporary development. OK, but how did we get here? How did Marxism come to be in this crisis? A big part of the answer is that our trend and its Marxist theory were shaped in an earlier era, and the subsequent changes in society have sharply revealed some of

our shortcomings.

To talk about an issue such as this, like, ummm...uh...historical analysis, man, you know, it's a...like difficult, man for x-mlp trends. Heh-heh, heh-heh, heh-heh. The icon people believe in unchanging true ideas and sacred trends, so merely the concept of social development after 1849 shaping ideas is Greek to them. The middle section is largely stuck in the constipation of "relatively worked out and accurate views," which vetoes any discussion on a subject like this one, where the issues are obviously too complex and fresh to allow an initial basis of focused investigation and informed views.

Luckily, we have e-mail, and I don't give a fuck about maintaining a facade of being an expert. Therefore, I can raise some tentative thoughts for discussion.

How did we get into this mess? Two of the many contexts: 1) The level of complexity and corresponding self-image of our theory was formed in and part of a scientific/intellectual climate of a past era that is rapidly leaving. 2) Our trend was a wing of and shaped by a particular historical wave, the receding of which has revealed the fact that our politics are, to be kind, full of holes. I cover these points below under the headings, "scientific rationalism" and "post-WWII wave," respectively.

the old scientific rationalism

In the 70s we thought we knew quite a bit about world development, etc., Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought. To a large degree we figured we needed to win over people to the correct

outlook/frameworks and party-building process. After great delay and inertia, the obvious failure of socialism in China and Albania began to sink in, and our attitude changed to one of greater questioning and feeling that we lacked important theoretical grasp. To a degree, the old 70s confidence left. So we started to study more and different things. The more our questioning broadened, the more we saw the study as important to discover answers. For awhile, we thought that the study would eventually yield many answers and then our confidence would return.

This didn't happen. Within each topic of study, the more information we gained, the more questions were raised. And the more questions were raised, it got to the point where we couldn't even pose the questions anymore. There's an old Bugs Bunny scene where he opens a door and there's another door behind it, and then another, and so on. Pretty soon he's tearing through them at 50 miles an hour, with no end in sight. Our study was different. For each door we opened, there were five more doors side by side. And if we opened any one of them, there were five more behind each one.

For awhile, we kept thinking: boy, this subject is a little trickier than I thought, it's going to take a bit longer to sort out. And a little while later, given the 2-tier structure of only a few studying, a certain frustration/desperation set in among the people studying. Joseph was out on stage doing parlor tricks and monologues to stall for time, while the real act, the research, was backstage getting ready, preparing the conclusions. (In Seattle, we forced most, rather than a minority, to go

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through the misery of investigation that couldn't reach its perceived goals.)

I don't think this was a temporary situation, that a certain quantity of study would eventually overcome. The phenomena of more information raising more questions was a pattern that was revealing a feature of the way the world and knowledge exists, contrary to our previous conception. And there was a basic fact that society is much more complex than we had thought and our frameworks for thinking about it were way too simple. I suspect that all fields of science are progressing along a similar trajectory of realization of and adaptation to the fact that their field is being revealed as way more complex than their frameworks assumed it to be.

My guess is that the scientific advances during the European enlightenment processes ushered in a scientific rationalist euphoria about the "near-comprehension" of the world. The peak of this euphoria was perhaps in the 1950s during the cold war. Thereafter, accumulating data in different fields became large enough, especially with the development of computers, to begin blowing away the old euphoria. This proceeded at different rates in different fields. Probably along the typical pattern of first in the simplest and stepwise to the more complex: natural sciences, then organic sciences, then social sciences. Each advance influenced the overall intellectual climate and impacted the other fields.

The old scientific rationalist euphoria was bogus and won't return in the current era. I think the old 70s ACWM/COUSML style of confidence, and the morally superior self-image that went along with it, was an example of this scientific rationalism (albeit a most extreme one). We should not seek its return. The generally advancing intellectual climate of society will not accept its return anyway. (Except, perhaps, in a situation of extreme crisis and setback of civilization. Maybe this is what Joseph is holding out for.) If we seek the return of pat answers and supreme confidence in them, we will be disappointed.

Wherever our study leads us, it will not be to the replacement of one set of simple catechisms with another. Our theoretical frameworks will have to be more

complex. They will have to be able to: 1) handle and facilitate rapidly advancing study with its plural and changing views (knowledge coming in the form of the Bugs Bunny 5 factor doors), yet also, 2) construct out of this chaos, useful ideas or ranges of ideas that provide unity and guide practice. [1]

For a very general example of the result of complex theory on the trend's image: I would say that a future struggle for a social revolution should not drape itself in an "almost-known" scientific rationalist posture as the communist revolutions did. Rather (assuming first of all a significant advance in the grasp of historical processes), the image would have to be of something more flexible, like "informed trial and error." You would think that the experience of war communism in the Soviet revolution should have been enough to dispel the old "know it all" beliefs. But no, many decades and much blood later, the bulk of the left would still rather go to the grave than give up one molecule of arrogance. To the grave it is.

Marx and Engels had their share of millennialism and overestimation of their grasp of history. But features of the discoveries of materialism cut against the grain of the trend of that era to make science the new religion, the new "timeless truth." For example, my favorite quotation of Engels: "The history of science is the history of the gradual clearing away of this nonsense or rather of its replacement by fresh but less absurd nonsense." [2]

There is talk about religious Marxism. What is religion? Can it be defined as merely outdated science? Trying to hold onto an idea beyond its time?

the post-WWII wave

After WWII there was a big wave of political movement pushed by anti-colonial and other struggles for accelerated development of countries of the third world. I couldn't begin to analyze the features of it. The main point is that because it was so big and China was a part of it (1/3 of humanity), it made socialist revolution, i.e. the Marxist theory and stands of that time (including the mlp trend), a plausible alternative. The myriad

third world struggles themselves had both progressive and egalitarian aspects, and China had palpable egalitarian internal policies, Marxist theory, support for popular struggles abroad. Thus socialism, as an extreme and genuine form of progressive, revolutionary, and egalitarian politics, seemed plausible, including in the U.S. This was reflected in very broad, popular movements for Chinese things in the late 60s, among everything from churches to panthers to mlps.

However, the historic relevance of that socialist theory was a false appearance that was bolstered by features of the historical-political wave. It later turned out that the wave was mainly founded on certain developmental stages that were not socialist. The Chinese/Soviet model wasn't even useful for development after an initial period and was inflexible. And the mlp and similar trends really had no significant and accurate analysis of their societies nor a socialist alternative program. Once the particular development issues passed and the historical wave receded, the socialists like the mlp were not merely left alone. The conditions that had given their politics the false appearance of being a plausible alternative had left. Instead of analysis of society and programs for social change, the theory and politics were revealed as catechisms and utopian wordplays, and increasingly, journalistic evasion.

Compare the situation to a fish riding the crest of a big wave. He tells many other fish with him that together, they will ride that wave over the entire continent ahead. Some believe as long as the wave keeps rolling. Later, when the fish is washed up on shore and the tide has gone out, he is alone. But more than this, doubt has been cast on his previous conception that the wave could submerge the continent.

In short, our theory and politics were shaped by the post-WWII wave, whatever it was. They appeared relevant and workable in the context of the historical-political wave of the time, but really weren't. As with all the socialist and nationalist political ideologies filling the heads of the participants in this wave, their usefulness consisted not in their fantastic self-description taken literally, but in however they may have ended up

assisting the historical development of specific countries and regions.

The mlp's literal self-description is pretty useless, but aspects of our ideologies may prove adaptable and productive in the contemporary situation. Some of our remnants or trends may prove competent to discern processes of social development and advance programs for social change. But if so, a lot of work must be done for basic orientation. Any amount of rhetoric is possible, of course. (And if some find a new biosphere to seal themselves in, where they can journalistically avoid complex issues, they may believe it.) But little of real meaning can be said beyond the need to update historical materialism, in order to grasp and intervene in social development. Anything more requires research, and the research is hobbled and will remain so for some time, by the many-sidedness of the theoretical crisis.

B. outline of theoretical problems

Where should we focus our study to advance theory? We can't expect much precision in choosing topics or succession of topics at this time, since the research itself will help reveal the more significant problems. Ideological stumble may turn up more than ideological struggle. However, the problems are neither few nor isolated. Research and comparison of a broad range of diverse subjects is needed.

The aim of the outline below is to put this broadness into a certain context, to look at different but interrelated levels of our theoretical problems. This is my current attempt to describe issues we have stumbled across so far. At least these problems exist; discussion could construct a better outline.

1) perspective towards science

Developing a new perspective and new frameworks will be assisted by looking at other fields of science besides our own. This will shed light on such things as: a) What are the nature of advances being made in natural and organic sciences? b) What does the history of scientific development indicate about

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the general patterns and processes of scientific/theoretical revolution? c) What is the general intellectual climate like that is shaping the views of social sciences, whether we are aware of it or not?

2) theory of history

This is the dread issue of updating historical materialism. I think this theory was Marx's greatest discovery. He was not, before all else, a revolutionary. Rather, his advance of historical materialism made him of great importance to revolution. However, Marx's collection and advance of the theory of history was an embryonic, simple discovery.

The base/superstructure metaphor, for example, must be replaced with a more detailed grasp of interaction of social spheres. I think there will eventually turn out to be some merits to this concept once its generality is compared to specific descriptions. But we'll never know one way or another without advance, since the general metaphor is useless compared to the complexity of social development that we are already aware of but cannot decipher.

Marx was only able to start on the work he sought to accomplish. For example, of the six subjects of political economy that he aimed to cover at the start of his work, only three were completed (capital, landed property, wage labor—while he did not get to the state, foreign trade, and the world market). My guess is that the theory of the state was barely scratched via comments in the midst of analysis of a handful of particular historical examples, while the sphere of culture was touched on even less.

In the 1890s, Engels complained bitterly of the younger generation failing to continue the study of history that he and Marx had begun. (Fortunately, he didn't know what was to become of Marxism during the stagnant period of socialist thought from 1917 to 1989.) Engels specifically denounced the habit of failing to consider the autonomy and interaction of different spheres of social relations, in favor of simplistic economic determinism. He said that he and Marx were forced to overemphasize the economic side by the need to battle those who denied it altogether, but that in

specific historical cases they analyzed the relation of different spheres correctly. [2] All this may be true, but if so, it doesn't necessarily contradict the likelihood that a few examples from that period did not flesh out historical materialism far enough to be of adequate service a century later.

Assessing historical materialism will force one up against questions about the relation of the generality of the original Marxism, to specific tangents such as social-democracy, Leninism-communism, and Western Marxism (Gramsci, etc.). "Historical materialism" became vastly different in each version. (And similarly there are the myriad tangents following the death of Lenin within the general Leninism-communism branch.) What social developments shaped the original Marxism, and what ones shaped the divergences?

There are many subdivisions of this front of investigation— political economy, the theory of the state, and theory of culture; and all the further subdivisions of these social spheres. While our field is historical science and especially its political and economic aspects, the interrelated nature of social development requires us to have some awareness of the rest of the social sciences. The relations that fall under the broad category of culture must be looked into more than before.

We absolutely cannot comprehend historical processes of development without an advance of historical materialist theory. It strikes me that there are two especially big holes as far as historical study and analysis is concerned: comparative study of dynastic societies, and of the communist states.

Judging by the previous impacts on history by the agricultural and then the industrial revolution, it's probably safe to say that the impact of the information revolution on each of the spheres of social relations, and society overall, is a fairly important subject.

3) contemporary development

a) myriad economic, political, and cultural processes and conflicts

This is both a fact/event gathering,

and an analysis of small, local processes. We need to try to see the processes, the social groups, and the institutions at play.

b) regions and development

This is a higher, more general level of attempting to discern the processes of development in different regions. It is in this realm of investigation that our general perspectives, our "politics," can arise.

Analysis of any region is blocked if the approach is to fit it into the assumed march of history—the socialist revolution or steps towards it. Instead, we must seek to discover the overall processes of social development: Where are they heading, what are the parameters, what might the possible alternatives be? What is different in different regions? What is the substance of interdependencies between regions? What are the economic, political, and cultural components of developmental (or lack thereof) processes? Etc.

A revolutionary analysis of development requires building a framework that defines "progress" and "reaction" in the historical/regional case at hand. What economic, political, or cultural alternatives could contribute to accelerating development in the most progressive and egalitarian ways possible? What social forces are moving towards these alternatives? The ability to do this analysis has almost completely disappeared from the entire old left, including x-mlp remnants.

Grasp of social developmental processes, and corresponding concepts of progress/reaction, can serve as the basis for the frameworks of our political theory and our programs for social change. Socialist theory must come from this basis of study of the world.

C. problems and tasks of study

labor division

One of the lessons of our study in the 80s is that research into any one topic can only go so far in comprehension without being assisted by study of other topics. One can study Soviet history until hell freezes over, but without illumination provided from advances in other fields, the enigma can't be figured out.

Why is this? It is because many sides of our theoretical frameworks are unreliable, and consequently, we rely on many faulty assumptions in the pursuit of investigation. This doesn't mean there shouldn't be a labor division. Rather, as soon as possible, the labor division should try to encompass all the important fields.

This division, with blind persons groping different parts of the elephant, presents a major obstacle. The research on each topic remains unreliable because it lacks the data from others that is needed for analysis. Consequently, no individual or group in one topic area can trust the work in others. This is not misinterpretation but real—research on a topic may languish for years without advance and it's useless for others. There is no shortcut around this problem. There must be a broad labor division among diverse fields, a rapid sharing of thoughts between fields, and as much overlap as possible between the areas of focused study or data collection of individuals. Everyone will just have to accept the reality of poor analysis and slow advance for a period.

There is productivity in both specialization/focus, and its opposite, diversity/balance. If all our activists are drawn into the investigation work, they will tend in one direction or the other. Some will put more time into political work, including focused, long term study. Others' relation to politics will stem more from acquaintance with it in their daily lives. The strength of the latter tendency naturally lies in superior ability to compare politics to other spheres of social relations, since they spend relatively more time focusing on the latter. The ideas that come from this "diversity productivity" are a useful counterweight—to disparate researchers that can't understand each other, whose changing ideas inevitably bend towards logic of the field they are focusing on. Our activity needs to be planned so as to draw on the strengths of both the specialization and diversification tendencies.

(If the specialization goes too far, then you get persons who are both without lives and have wacked-out politics, with each condition exacerbating the other—a la the Detroit people. The law of diminishing returns.)

The old research floundered on prob-

lems of labor division. Thinking diverged under the influence of particular topics of research with one of three results: a) the researchers held onto the topic for years in order to get anywhere at all and didn't get far, b) the researchers submitted the work to the black hole, c) the researchers resigned from the mlp. We must confront the problems of labor division better than before.

WOAV constipation and dilettantism

The problems of labor division are minor compared to the box culture of "relatively worked out and accurate views." WOAV is another name for the mlp's culture of monolithic suppression of discussion, and hence, thought. If you don't have WOAV, if your views aren't backed up by thorough study, then don't speak. This may well have played a favorable role in the development of the mlp trend earlier. But in the end, it was fundamental to the mlp's failure to adapt.

WOAV alleges to serve the maintenance of high standards of analysis, etc. It fails this in at least two ways. The high standards were replaced by an appearance of high standards—evading controversial issues by living in a biosphere-ML dreamworld. Even the best of our research documents that contributed most to chipping at the box from the inside, suffered from this culture of evasion. And the keeping of one's non-backed up ideas to one's self undermines the process of debate and discussion. This latter is like protectionism. Each may protect his views in order to develop them better, but the lack of discussion at each stage means, ironically, that the overall development of the ideas, and therefore the development of ideas of each, is hampered.

There are two roles in the WOAV culture—intimidator and intimidated. Discussion is blocked from both ends. The intimidator role has been reduced to a laughing stock. But the intimidated role does not require the icon people around for it to continue. Repudiating this culture requires developing something different.

In contrast to WOAV regulations, I believe that "pooling of ignorance" will

always have an indispensable value in assisting research. It compares views and thus establishes the given level of thinking on an issue at a particular time. The research proceeds from there. But the dangers of ignorance pooling are that too much time could be spent on it at the expense of other types of work, or that it could push the lowering of standards of investigation and analysis. These are immediate and likely dangers, since the posture of WOA V could easily be opposed from the angle of dilettantism and a lowering of standards.

An unseen but very real aspect of WOA V culture was to lower the competition between ideas by erecting ideological/emotional walls (biosphere-ML) impervious to many opposing views. The point of opposing monolithism is not to open up the situation for more garbage, but just the opposite, to create more competition between views so that the quality rises. We are working to increase the information flow, but we just as much need to find ways to push the highest quality of work on the ideas at each step. The mere opening up of discussion is not adequate to replace WOA V culture.

How can we encourage both useful sharing of partial and speculative ideas and raise our standards of analysis? How can we pressure for the best effort and quality both with the speculative/partial ideas and in the researched and more developed ones? I don't have any answers. Ben has raised various thoughts about binary electronic mediums. Perhaps this or similar ideas will help. Development of sophisticated electronic mediums, however, assumes there are enough people who want to get out of the box to use them. This would be quite a whimsical assumption at this point. Probably the first step is for each local area to confront and reform the culture of discussion within its own bodies, and then build up a different usage of e-mail.

If the problem is not solved—if we can't or won't find methods, structure, and culture to develop both ignorance pooling and informed discussion based on focused research—then the x-mlp remnants will fail to adapt themselves.

the black hole material

Each area has various tasks that are essential to stabilize their work. Beyond these, it follows from my above views, that the first priority should be to get the black hole material on disk so that it is available as resource material and as background for general thinking. I don't believe the value of this data can be overestimated. It is not valuable for its analysis, which in many and perhaps all cases, isn't worth much. Rather, the collection of historical facts and events in relatively concise and easy to use places, will speed up further analysis.

outward data collection

As I have pointed out in the past, I think the improvement of our outward collection of information is a central task and every participant should be drawn into this work at some level. I will note two measures of the Seattle study group on this front. We have instituted a periodical search system, where a range of periodicals has been divided up among members to survey, and report or bring articles of possible interest to the group. We are also working on a database that will reference interesting articles that have been read by individuals, with a brief description of the content. Hopefully we can in the future describe and consult with others on e-mail about these projects, so that they can be improved, made available for the use of others, and perhaps developed in cooperation with others.

D. summation

Detroit is beyond the pale and will never change, except for the worse. They are dinosaurs already dead and fossilized. It cannot yet be said that the same is the case with Seattle, the middle section, or Chicago. The dissolution was a positive step that removed the organizational dead weight of icon ideology. We are now free to develop study.

What we in Seattle want from the x-mlp persons is the maximum number who will reorient themselves like we are—making investigation the first priority. We want the widest possible collaboration to collectively build an investigation/discussion apparatus, consider the problems, divide the labor, etc. Diverse

views and methods can conceivably contribute to this process for a time. But others should consider some of the lessons of the Detroit/mlp collapse. Attempting to glue any of the x-mlp groups together with pretensions of having some "special knowledge" or being a "special class-ideological trend" is both inaccurate and shaky.

No doubt we all have specific ideological features, but they are nothing to get hyped up about at this time. Our ideas are so partial and so distant from contemporary issues, that they must be filled in a bit before there will be any basis to say the specific ideology or theory or politics is useful or not. Seattle gets along just fine without special ideological pretensions, with a different outlook: iconoclasm towards traditional left views, and openness to many new ideas. Every area won't develop on the same basis, but I think there is a general parameter facing everyone. Either you shift your outlook to one that facilitates study of the world and lose a few icon people, or you don't, and lose everyone.

There is no safe harbor from thinking, where one can chant a few mantras, help an old leaflet across the street, and feel secure in the knowledge that one's self is morally superior to other humans. There is no predetermined course or foreseen outcome of history (though past developments will continue to reverberate through and shape the future). Reorientation towards investigation won't provide these or any other nirvanas. It won't ensure adaptation or that anyone develops useful theory. It won't secure unity of all. (Something like a trend of trends will be needed. But still, other trends will diverge farther. The development of study and discussion can't aim to abolish ideological processes, but to speed them up.)

Depending on how they unfold and whether they include Seattle, the Boston-led investigation projects may prove a vehicle to the needed reorientation and adaptation. I hope so; the quickest route is the best. If this collaboration is fruitful, then it will provide an alternative to Joseph's wonderland for Chicago. If the rest of us can't get anything useful going, there would hardly be any grounds for pointing fingers at Chicago.

One other matter should be mentioned. None of our groups are holy. The adaptation is being forced by history. All of the old left will have the choice between adapting, and for all intents and purposes, being killed. If any of our remnants do adapt, they won't be the only ones. The current organizing among x-mlp groups is not only a preparation and lever for hooking up with others. Without hooking up, we will have a tough time getting out of the box. Here again, the issue should be to learn. Without some knowledge, we won't know who we should collaborate with and what will be useful, and no one in their right mind would want us anyway.

Fred, Seattle

notes:

[1] Joseph and Mark are "pondering over Anti-Duhring." (See Frederick Engels, Anti-Duhring. Part I. Philosophy—especially "Classification. Apriorism" and "Morals and Law. Eternal Truths.") That is, they are turning somersaults to find the right amount of truthfulness that good theory must have. To say that it is "proven" but not quite "final," seems to satisfy their needs. But this is precisely the wrong quest. A feature of both levels of the theoretical frameworks that we need, both the rapidly changing and the relatively agreed upon,

is that they are temporary. Affirming some proven or almost final character of an idea won't make it anymore accurate. This quest is not for accuracy as it may be described, but reflects a pining for the comfort and solace of stable and fervently held views. I.e., the emotional advantage of knowing that one's self is right and "the good guy."

The icon ideology's view of knowledge is molasses which gums up both sides of the learning process. At one end—the confusion of gathering and considering facts and partial views of processes—an open mind and open discussion is needed. The icon outlook places a moralist tension over this, in the direction of conforming to traditional views. At the other end—the study of the processes of change of abstract principles—the icon view of static theory obliterates any understanding of patterns of scientific revolution.

Joseph has stopped referring to his "unchanging stand, viewpoint and method of M-L," but the same static conception of theory remains. It is again illustrated in Detroit #28. For Joseph, "M-L" is an integral theoretical framework, discovered in certain historical conditions, and therefore quite different from, say, the "guesses" of Aristotle from an earlier period. On the other hand, it is quite different from certain Marxists at certain periods who actually "revised" their theory away from the specific integral framework. This view is nominally historical, but with a history that moves

in clanking stone blocks. Apparently, we are now in the post-1849 block, to which the "integral M-L" corresponds.

In reality, whatever portion of Marxist thinking is sorted out by Joseph to be the real McCoy, it is still subject to the same processes of formation and change that every other scientific theory is. It was never unchanging between 1849 and 1918. And its precursors, formation, changes and evolutionary divergences, are all relevant to discovering links between particular social development and particular theories. Joseph is so extreme in his icon viewpoint, he thinks that if theory changes, then it can't have a general framework and is useless: "If the simple passage of time suffices to undermine the value of any theoretical work, if there is no general framework that this work is contributing to, then what's the point of it?"

Joseph's clanking blocks of history are well illustrated by his description of the contemporary era: "...the dazzling technological development embellished and accentuated the basic capitalist framework which came into existence some time ago." This view is quite wrong. Quite accurate is his description of my views: we are in a basically new situation, zillions of times more developed than the past, which has transcended the old social contradictions and struggles of the past. The basic disagreement over the need to study the world can't be illustrated any more clearly than by this counterposition.

For all the chanting of mantras, we never seem to see any description or application of the icon people's cherished M-L framework. Except of course, the old thin gruel agitation, the latest installments of the saga of the battle between rich and poor. Judging by this evidence, which is all that we have, it appears that the distinctive features of Joseph's M-L framework predate 1849—they go back to Spartacus at least.

[2] See Frederick Engels, Selected Letters, Beijing, p. 71-104. The quote is from Engels' letter to Conrad Schmidt, October 27, 1890, p. 85. The point on the failure to study history begins on page 72.

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Plebeian class consciousness and socialist revolution

by Joseph, Detroit,
March 19, 1994. (Detroit #31)

Part two of Fred's article "What can be learned from the bloodbath regarding approaches to investigation" (Seattle #45, printed in *CWV TJ*, no. 3) returns to the question of the dichotomization of society. Fred claimed in part one (Seattle #41, printed in *CWV TJ*, no. 2) that the Marxist class polarization is not taking place, while I and some other comrades believe that present developments are laying the basis for sharper class divisions and the destabilization of present equilibriums. In part two, Fred raises the issue of what follows if class polarization isn't happening.

Fred says that "Boston 5 (printed in *CWV TJ*, no. 2) notes that history so far has not conformed to Marx's theory of the polarization of society..., nor Lenin's adjustment..." His conclusion is to call for a reassessment of whether class is indeed more fundamental than stratum, nationality, gender, etc. and of whether socialist revolution is the path forward.

The Boston Communist Study Group had claimed, in Boston #5, that no one

held in our circles held "That Leninism, and perhaps Marxism are a burden not a tool, and that we need to start from scratch to develop class analysis and revolutionary theory, and more." But here we see that Fred is going back to the issue of whether class struggle really is the driving forces of history at this time.

If class polarization diminishes?

Fred writes:

"I think that the past assumption that this dichotomization must be taking place is tied in with a whole lot of other assumptions that may not have any basis in observable development. Such as:

a) In the processes of social development, class interests must necessarily override the interests driven by other social groupings, such as of stratum, still smaller economic groupings, ethnicity, gender, nation.

b) The current stage of advance of social development must take the form of something called socialist revolution.

c) Some poor classes have 'true interests' related to this advance of stage

while other beliefs or actions they manifest are the result of 'deception.' It is therefore essential to construct hegemony of these classes."

Fred says that we shouldn't make these "assumptions" or else "one could easily miss the complex and peculiar causes and contexts of the political behavior of strata and classes in specific situations."

Fred is reacting to the present situation, where politics is stagnant in the U.S. and the working class disorganized on the national and international level. Redwing, in his letter, also reacts to this situation, and says "I also can't hang with the idea of dividing the world so neatly between proletarian and bourgeois, revolutionary and opportunist/social-democratic, etc. I think that peoples' motivations, and the forces that give rise to change in the world, are a lot more complicated than we have given credit to them in the past." (E-mail of Feb. 16, 1994) He looks to love and "New Age" ideas (and I hope he finds the personal solace he is seeking), whereas Fred looks to the well-rounded life and the information revolution. Redwing is bowing out of class

From Baba to Tovarishch

The Bolsheviks and Women's Emancipation

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politics, while Fred insists that he is carrying forward—er, well, what exactly is he carrying forward?

The anti-revisionist critique? No. He opposes the very concept that there is a distinction between revisionism and Marxism.

Leninism? No, he thinks that is tainted with Stalinism.

Marxism? No, it can't really be separated from Leninism in that way and, anyway, he thinks the Marxist polarization of society and emphasis on "plebeian" hegemony is wrong.

Communism? Probably not. At one time it seemed some comrades regarded "workers' communism" as a replacement for communism. But now Fred's Revolutionary Socialist Study Group (RSSG) doesn't seem to use that term either (although the main thing I have to judge this by is their November leaflet announcing their existence). And Fred ridicules my former agitational work concerning the future classless society.

Socialist revolution? No, as we shall see, he thinks this too is just an assumption.

Methods of investigation? Well, we're back to the old idea of the Academic Activities Committee, based on the idea of serious discussion and investigation but without having any platform. As a former Program Director of an AAC at the University of British Columbia, I certainly wouldn't want to disparage such activities. But I didn't think then, and I don't think now, that a political trend can be based on this.

Does the working class exist?

Well, if it's hard to see what trend Fred supports, let's just go through his three points.

Let's start with point a). This could be rephrased as "does the working class exist?" If considerations of "stratum, still smaller economic groupings, ethnicity, gender, nation" are more important than class, then what's left of the concept of the working class? It would just be an arbitrary definition by a statistician, but it wouldn't correspond to actual divisions in the world. In the real sense of the word, there would not be a working class,

just a workforce with working people distributed over different occupations, neighborhoods, nationalities, etc.

Fred's conception of this isn't something new, but he appears to have been working towards it for some time.

For example, consider how the RSSG of Seattle revised Frank's timber article. In its thoughts about the future at the end of the article, it said that "several key elements of a socialist revolution" were being brought about by economic development, especially by "computers and the information revolution". One was "cosmopolitan" culture (i.e., increased ethnic identity and international awareness)." It's one thing to point out that socialism will provide for national freedom. It's another to call for ethnic consciousness instead of class consciousness. And it talks of "international awareness", rather than a class-based internationalism. As we now see, this probably wasn't in the interest of popularization, but because Fred has doubts about class consciousness.

Moreover, Fred's concept of pluralism, that he has been developing for some time, seems connected to this view of class taking a back seat. Presumably the idea was that a multiplicity of trends always exist among the workers based on their different occupations, strata, immediate interests of all types. A party of workers becomes just a coalition of these trends or tendencies or groupings. This does indeed follow from a mechanical materialist view of the relationship between objective conditions and consciousness. Only dialectical or revolutionary materialism can see how the work-

ers can get beyond their immediate sectional and occupational interests to the formation of a class stand. Those who insist on a mechanical correlation of the objective and subjective will either stumble over how class interests are formed, or will detach radical consciousness from the objective conditions and convert it into solely a matter of understanding.

It is not my intention here to try to prove the fundamental nature of class interests. Everything I have studied, all the work we have done, have reinforced my belief in this. If the course of our revolutionary work and analysis over years have led Fred to a different conclusion, then a few paragraphs or pages won't make a difference. What I wish to do is point out the significance of the question Fred is raising. He has done a service in posing the question with such clarity.

Socialist revolution

Fred further believes that the supposed absence of dichotomization raises whether our platform should be socialist revolution. He wishes to investigate whether there is another form of "advance of social development".

It can be noted that socialist revolution has been gradually receding from Fred's view. In the timber agitation, Frank's article was originally a vigorous call for "For radical change and socialism". Its revision by the RSSG expressed some doubt about this.

The leaflet still attacked many features of capitalism as did the original

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article; it didn't talk of the "dynamism" of present-day capitalism, as Fred did in "Bloodbath" #1 (Seattle #41). The leaflet talked of the "waste and corruption", the resistance to change, the "destabilizing" nature of current economic development, the "dislocation, structural unemployment, crisis, environmental devastation and war". But it wasn't sure about revolution. "For purposes of thinking and discussion", it said that it would "contribute...views which are in the realm of assertions."

It then went into various issues, including listing some features pointing to a socialist revolution (one of which—"cosmopolitan" culture—we have quoted above). But all these things were presented as speculation, as mere "assertions". And it did not call for the rule of the working class, but only talked of "a real ability of working people to participate in and influence politics". As we shall see later on, this doesn't appear to be to popularize the concept of working class rule: instead, Fred has doubts about the dictatorship of the proletariat. And to restrict oneself to the call for the working people to take part in politics means to run the risk of not going beyond idealizing—however unwittingly—what already exists in a liberal democracy. The working people participate in politics, affect legislation, etc., but it's still a dictatorship of the rich.

Do the class interests of the proletariat tie it to socialist revolution?

Fred questions the hegemony of "some poor classes" based on his doubts that one can distinguish their "true interests" from "the result of deception".

To begin with, Fred is here questioning the idea of class consciousness. This is related to his point (a), where he questions whether class is really more fundamental than other divisions among the working people. But here he connects his doubts specifically to the "poor classes", thus continuing his vendetta against giving any special revolutionary role to the "plebeians".

Fred examines these questions from the standpoint of mechanical materialism. When it came to Leninism, Fred couldn't see a general body of theory or

framework apart from the particular actions of Lenin at each and every moment. Here Fred can't see a class interest apart from the immediate words and actions of the plebeian workers at any particular time. Whatever the workers say now, must reflect their actual class interests and the actual nature of their class position. Either the workers are being consciously "deceived" by someone, or their words or actions are automatically the accurate reflection of class interest.

Fred moves from this to questioning whether "some sort of hegemony of the lower mass, whether a dictatorship of the proletariat or some other form, needs to be an accepted principle." This correlation by Fred isn't strictly logical, of course. The "middle" strata have not done any better than the poor as far as radical consciousness. Indeed, in the recent period, for example, what large sections of them have formed a mass basis for Reaganism!

Nevertheless once Fred can cast doubt on the plebeians, he feels free to attribute wonderful qualities to the higher strata. When he talks of the plebeian revolt, he reminds us that no such revolution has achieved socialism. But when he talks of the other classes, his standpoint changes. Then Fred holds that "History shows repeated examples of comfortable and elite classes revolting against higher classes." (In the section "how wide is the problem of social strata".) It would be useful if he elaborated this point, and described which revolts he was talking about: that would help give a picture of what types of revolts correspond to what classes.

Moreover, when it comes to talking about social strata who are not oppressed by their "all-round working conditions," he discovers that that it's wrong to go "too far in the direction of seeing classes as incapable of advancing their comprehension of society and acting in response to this increase." What happened to the doubt about the "true interests" of the workers and whether these tied the working class to revolution? These doubts, and the mechanical materialist reasoning, apply only to the commoners. For others, one shouldn't underestimate their ability to comprehend the historical process.

The plebeian revolt

Meanwhile, while Fred questions the socialist revolution and the hegemony of the proletariat, he nevertheless tries to explain away his remarks on the "plebeian revolt". In his Box #1 he shouted indignantly that I had invented these remarks of his out of whole cloth. Now that the BCSG recall these remarks, he admits he said them but tries to reinterpret them.

He claims that he didn't speak to the "issue of plebeian hegemony...one way or another." He says "All I said was that a purely lower mass revolution is impossible to build socialism."

What an equivocation! And a little addition of the word "purely". But isn't a plebeian revolt one where the lower mass has hegemony, where they are the leading social force? No, says Fred. It's simply one where ONLY the plebeians take part, a "purely lower mass" revolution, and hence the question of hegemony is not involved!!! What word-chopping!!!

And he says this in an article—"Bloodbath" #2—where one of his main themes is to question proletarian hegemony in the revolution. This is only an assumption in his view. But he would have us believe that, when he denounced "plebeian revolt" earlier, the issue of plebeian hegemony wasn't yet on his mind. But whether it was or wasn't on his mind, that is the main content of the question of the plebeian revolt.

Now, what kind of revolution would a "purely lower mass" revolution be? Both Boston #5 and Fred seem to imply that unless the "middle strata" are in a revolution from the start, they will not take part in the running of factories, etc. In fact, the Russian revolution shows that many personnel from the skilled strata, may, if the regime is stable, return to their positions. What they will do in those positions is another question: on the whole, most will seek—from the force of training and even from the genuine conviction that they are helping, and not just from the ill intent of some—to reintroduce the old methods. The more there are skilled people with communist stands, or at least ideas critical of the old ways, the better conditions will exist for com-

bating this retrograde motion towards the old methods—and the easier it will be to facilitate drawing the mass of workers into the administration of society and the direction of the economy. But the question of whether a mass of trained personnel will lend their skills to the economy and society after a revolution is not the same as whether these personnel are part of the basic motive force bringing that revolution.

True, one would usually expect that the onset of revolution would be notable for mass trends from the “middle” strata being upset at the old society, but this alone does not necessarily mean they have been “won over” to the proletarian side. Politics is a bit more complex than that.

Fred confuses these issues. He contrasts the plebeian revolt to the constructive activity of running the society. So he wonders what would happen without those who design the machines? Why, “plebeian revolts could share the wealth until it’s gone. But to build socialism, to have a successful solving of the major social problems there has to be, it seems to me, a very close productive relationship of the higher educated technical strata and the lower masses, where a new higher productivity type of society can be built.” (From discussion at the Fourth Congress) He doesn’t see that the plebeian revolt might be the essential condition for such utilization of technical knowledge, and for its spread among the masses, but contrasts the plebeian revolution to the technical knowledge.

The armies of the white collar

Fred also tries to soften the elitist impression created by his view of the plebeian revolt by implying that, when he talks about the middle strata, he really was only talking about “clerical-type workers”. He says that Boston 5 was wrong to think that “the issue of contention was professional, not clerical workers.” So he says: “My conception was that the issue was precisely clerical type workers.”

Excuse me. Clerical-TYPE workers? What does this mean? Who might they be? They turn out to be “the techs at

Boeing, who are more like clerical than professional workers.” Whoa. If we are talking about technical workers, why dress them up as clerical workers?

For that matter, if Fred were really only talking about clerical workers—presumably the lower-paid ones are the issue here—then why did he draw a contrast to plebeian revolts?

Actually, however, he was dealing with a much broader “middle” category. This controversy developed from a discussion of a passage of Ray’s May Day speech in Seattle of 1991. Ray said: “There are vast armies of white collar strata (engineers, accountants, technicians) who are nearer to blue collar workers in economic and social level. Of course, others of them who are now highly paid may not like the new society and would be expected to cause problems.” (The Supplement, July 26, 1991, p. 26, col. 2)

Fred also referred to such a large grouping. He talked of “60,000 white collars—management, professionals, engineers, technical workers, and general office (secretaries, etc.) are the official categories—at Boeing in the Seattle area.” (The Supplement, 20 February 1992, p. 7 col. 2). He added that “The majority average less pay than the 40,000 blue collar.”

Fred does distinguish between the majority of the white collar and “highly skilled and highly paid...petty-bourgeois sections”. But he did not correlate this distinction to the official categories he listed among the white collar. On the contrary. With respect to the engineers, for example, he went out of his way to say that “a significant minority” made less than the blue collar.

Is it prejudice?

But Fred has a further argument. Doesn’t Joseph too refer to these other middle strata, he asks. He quotes a passage from me out of context. I was arguing against Fred’s view that it is simply prejudice when the plebeians recognize the special features of the more highly-paid. What I wrote was:

“...Fred seems to be intent on the experience of a particular strike, and ignores the more general issue of whether there is anything positive in the workers

recognizing distinctions with the ‘white collar’, and whether it is possible for revolutionary sentiment to develop without workers pondering these distinctions. His list of white collar workers includes management and professionals as well as technical workers and office staff, and he himself distinguishes among them by referring to a ‘petty bourgeois section of the white collar’, yet [he] gives as an example of workers recognizing such distinctions only narrow-minded ‘craft chauvinism’ in a particular economic struggle. It is quite possible for workers to recognize the specific features of the professionals and higher-paid workers, technical workers and office staff, without scabbing on them, and such recognition is needed to understand what is going on in general in the economic and political struggle.” (The Supplement, July 26, 1991, p. 26, col. 2)

The polarization of views

So Fred’s considerations about the plebeian revolt and the white collar workers are in line with his general questions about whether proletarian class interests exist and whether we should stand for proletarian hegemony.

This is a time when the revolutionary movement hardly exists, the bourgeoisie feels it owns the whole show, and the working class barely even defends some immediate interests, if that. It’s not surprising that at such a time most people find that Marxist class polarization is an abstract concept.

I think this polarization exists, and that the theoretical task of communists in this regard is to show the class nature of the split between rich and poor that is developing on an ever-larger world scale. But no matter which view on class polarization comrades hold to, Fred’s views may prove of interest. They give an example of what conclusions might follow, to a greater or lesser extent, if the Marxist class polarization is actually fading. And they show the extent of the differences among us. □

Appendix: Reference material

The RSSG on the socialist alternative

Both in the article above and in my article "Censorship, Imperialism, and Revisionism" (Detroit #28), I referred to the leaflet of the Revolutionary Socialist Study Group, which Fred leads. It might be useful for comrades to have the entire last section of this leaflet as reference material.

The leaflet (so far the RSSG's only leaflet) came out in November last year and was based on comrade Frank's article on the Northwest timber industry in the August 10, 1993 *Workers' Advocate Supplement*. But it was revised by the RSSG; this included changes that the original author did not agree with. Among the major changes are that this last section replaced both the section of the original article "For radical change and socialism" and the original sidebar "What do we mean by socialism?"

The revision drops talk about revisionism and regards any mention of socialism as being just in the realm of "assertion". However, its views on present-day capitalism are not the same as the views in Fred's recent "Bloodbath" #1. The leaflet denounces the "destabilizing" nature of present-day development and the resulting "dislocation, structural unemployment, crisis, environmental devastation, and war", while "Bloodbath" enthused over "dynamic growth", held that parasitism and decay have been overcome, and lauded the "political and cultural transformations" brought by imperialism.

The last section of the RSSG leaflet goes as follows:

Socialist alternative

The Clinton compromise is a sign of the failure of the current economic system (with its features of corporate capital, comprehensive markets, and government regulation) to deal with the timber crisis. This system shows itself to be myopic and narrow. It pays attention to certain economic efficiencies and demands within narrow bounds—namely the immediate interests of established operations, such as to supply lumber or paper. But other considerations, like other values of old growth or even the long term supply of wood, get ignored. The government bodies do not have the exact same interests as various companies, as

shown by the court injunction against logging. But the policy after government intervention is turning out not too different and with very similar problems. Part of the issue with the narrowness is the fact that corporate elites have a vested interest in the continuation of what makes them money, and economic clout to steer things in that direction.

The system shows itself extremely resistant to change. One effect of this inflexibility is to make it prone to prolonged and magnified imbalances, such as overproduction or over-cutting. Often change only comes through a major crisis. The system is prone to any amount of waste and corruption—as long as the corporate elite's pocketbooks don't suffer in the near term.

The fact that the system does not pursue the solutions proposed above is partly explained by opposition to the large amount of investment that they would require. The long term benefits cannot be considered by either the corporate or the government structures.

The above general observations on the operation of capitalism in the N.W. timber industry barely scratch the surface. Much deeper analysis is required to get a handle on the sources of problems in the nature of the economic system. For purposes of thinking and discussion, however, we will contribute some further views which are in the realm of assertions.

To break down the types of vested interests illustrated in the timber crisis, to allow a rapid collection and consideration of information and adjustment of economic activities, and to develop a planning that reflects the all-sided interests of the masses—would require fundamental changes in the economic and political structures. We would assert that such changes would be a form of socialism, though neither the Soviet model, the West European, nor various other "socialisms" came anywhere near such changes. The picture of such a society is far from clear. On the contrary, major theoretical tasks confront those who would seek an alternative to the contemporary environmental and human destruction. This process of advancing socialist theory must include study of the failures of the Russian and Chinese revolutions

to achieve socialism, and study of contemporary economic, political, and cultural development.

The economic development that is proceeding in the world today is destabilizing. None of the existing varieties of political structures of society can handle the changes without dislocation, structural unemployment, crisis, environmental devastation, and war. Today, this destabilization is often reflected in ever more desperate struggles for survival and ascendance, especially of ethnic groups and nations. At the same time, aspects of economic development, especially computers and the information revolution, are preparing better conditions for several key elements of a socialist revolution:

****accurate, comprehensive, and rapidly adjusting economic planning,**

****technical and cultural uplift of the working class and its participation in highly skilled/creative realms of labor,**

****"cosmopolitan" culture (i.e., increased ethnic identity and international awareness),**

****based on the above changes, a real ability of working people to participate in and influence politics—a broad democracy as opposed to the current narrow bourgeois hegemony.**

Egalitarian revolutions of various sorts have been launched many times in history, though as yet they have failed to materialize in the liberation of the majority, not to mention the abolition of classes. Is contemporary development bringing about conditions that would make a socialist society a real possibility? Can the various "have-nots" unite to take advantage of this possibility?

[This was followed by a box containing the following words:]

We'd appreciate your comments and criticisms on this issue. Our study group survives on interaction.

Revolutionary Socialist Study Group

(formerly Marxist-Leninist Party, USA, Seattle Branch)

P.O. Box 28951

Seattle, WA 98118 □

HOW MARX AND ENGELS ANALYZED COLONIALISM,

by Julie, Chicago, August 14, 1994

Inex-MLP circles discussion developed over how we should view the system of imperialism or over whether there is an imperialist system at all. One issue that has come up is over the "progressive" nature of imperialism. Should we be overwary with the development brought by modern day imperialism - the computers, robots, etc.? Is there a new stage of capitalism brought about by new technology. Will capitalism now bring "development" for the poor?

This issue came under discussion at the 4th Congress of the MLP in November 1992. For those interested in following the discussion and debate that occurred before and after the 4th Congress, the *CWV Theoretical Journal* of Jan. 25, 1994 carries a number of pertinent documents.

Since that time a lot has been said. Several former comrades have been swept up in the wonders of imperialist and capitalist development.

Fred waxes almost euphoric. Referring to the period of time since Lenin wrote the book "Imperialism, the Highest stage of capitalism" he says:

"Colonial monopoly was replaced with a much more accessible world market. Primitive trusts were broken up in favor of greater competition. (The big increase in state capitalism in the 30's-60's later saw some of its forms pared back, and the multinationals of the 50's are now having portions of their form pared into separate contractors.) Decay and parasitism gave way to dynamic growth. The division of labor developed a growing middle class rather than a small labor aristocracy, and colonial regions not only gained independence but some advanced to metropolitan capitals. Imperialism did not remain reaction all along the line until revolution, but gave rise to unprecedented growth and political and cultural transformation of regions." *CWV TJ* 3/30/94 p. 17

This is a more extreme statement. But there are other issues.

A number of our former comrades do not see any revolution around the corner

in the dependent countries. It is certainly true that at this time the revolutionary movements are in disarray. However, there are struggles breaking in places such as Chiapas. Besides this, there continues to be a certain level of struggle in South Africa, the Palestinian territories and other places. But, indeed, there are no immediate prospects for a successful revolutionary movement.

This is a very real issue. Yet in this situation some are abandoning any goal that is not "realistic". Out goes the Marxist critique of capitalism. They are now into glorification of development, or rather, of fantasies of development. Furthermore, in regards to the dependent countries, some comrades now seem to hold the view that dependency is the longed for motor of development and progress. For example, in Africa the only hope they see is if the imperialist powers decide to invest there. This is, they believe, the only possible motor of development.

These views lead to practical consequences in the stand towards world politics.

Jason submitted for discussion the "Notes/Outline on Palestinian Presentation" (see *CWV TJ* June 1, 1994). In this presentation he wonders whether imperialism and zionism will now bring development to the Palestinians.

In Jason's presentation he directly renounces revolution and a whole series of political and mass demands. Jason abandons the call for mass organizing, denounces revolutionary goals in the name of realism, and does one astonishing thing after another.

I doubt many of our former comrades would say they support Jason's position. Jason goes way too far for them in prettifying imperialism and zionism. For instance, I spoke to Joe and he disagrees with Jason's analysis. Yet some of our former comrades no longer view the Palestinian struggle as of much significance. They think that, at most, it will give rise to an economically unviable nation. Nor have any of the comrades in the former Party majority written in opposition to Jason's analysis. I think this is because there is some thinking in common with

Jason.

Many of them, too, are adopting "realism" when talking about the wonders of capitalist development or when talking about what stand to take towards various questions of present day world politics. This is leading to dogmatic approaches towards various political and economic questions. At the very least it is leading to various tensions in how to view things.

A COMMENT ON KATE'S PERSPECTIVE TOWARDS NAFTA

In January 1994 Kate submitted on e-mail a report she had prepared on NAFTA and California agriculture. This report contains a lot of useful information about the effects NAFTA is having and is projected to have on agribusiness on both sides of the border. In the report she talks about the need for struggle on both sides of the border against the economic offensive and calls for exposing the effects of NAFTA. In the conclusion to the report she states "The issue for the workers in the U.S. is NOT one of opposing NAFTA. The offensive against the workers on both sides of the border has been going on long before NAFTA and will continue whether NAFTA passes Congress or not. With or without "free trade", the U.S. bourgeoisie is bent on further driving down the conditions of the workers at home and tightening its grip abroad where it can. We must expose the role of NAFTA, and unite with the Mexican workers to build our unity and solidarity in the struggle against the bourgeoisie on both sides of the border." All well and good.

But when she put this report on e-mail she wrote some introductory comments. Among these was a critique of this statement. She states: "The report says that we do not call for opposition to NAFTA, but it does not develop a key point which is part of the basis for this line. It speaks of the devastation of the cannery and farmworkers in the US and the increasing exploitation of the Mexican workers as a result of the shift of food processing to Mexico but it does not

speak to how the movement of food processing operations into Mexico will develop the Mexican economy, create jobs for Mexican workers and bring them into the factories. To the extent this development takes place, even though it means increasing exploitation of the Mexican workers, it is in the interest of the Mexican workers and the international working class, including the workers in the US, among whom are thousands who have been thrown out of work by the food processing shut-downs."

This is a confused statement at best.

It seems that part of her motive in writing this introduction is to hit at the views of various comrades in Chicago. After all, some comrades have made statements and written articles critical of NAFTA. Also some comrades in Chicago think that there should be an agitational stand against NAFTA. I personally am in the camp of neither support nor oppose NAFTA. I am of this opinion at this point partly because it is a formal agreement between two governments. Also it is quite likely that even had NAFTA been defeated, the economic changes and consequences brought about by NAFTA would have been brought about anyway. Had NAFTA been defeated it would not mean an end to these consequences. The underlying issues are what are these economic consequences and how one judges them in relation to the class struggle. I also think that there are some provisions of NAFTA that one would support or certainly not oppose. (For instance, the agreement supposedly allows Mexican truck drivers to deliver goods to points in the U.S. instead of changing drivers at the border.) Other provisions should be vigorously opposed.

But the main reason I am discussing this point at present is that I don't think that one's stand towards NAFTA can be determined solely on general theoretical principles. One cannot take the simplistic stand that opposition to imperialism necessarily means issuing the call "Down with NAFTA." That view implies that if one does not oppose NAFTA one does not oppose imperialism. And I don't think this can be made a one to one issue. But, on the other side, it is also absurd to say, for instance, that Marxists hold the

view that capitalism develops the conditions and the productive forces necessary for a socialist revolution, and therefore one should support NAFTA.

What worries me about Kate's conclusion is that it appears she might be trying to decide a stand to NAFTA on just such theoretical principles. The shift of California agribusiness into Mexico, she seems to be saying, necessarily means "development" for Mexico because "capitalism necessarily means development." And we should support "development."

Perhaps in her statements she is thinking of the stands that Marx and Engels took towards the free trade debate in the late 1840's. Marx and Engels both declared themselves to be in favor of free trade and against the corn laws in England because they considered this to be the best conditions for the triumph of industrial capital, the defeat of the feudal and aristocratic classes and the conditions in which all the contradictions of capitalism would sharpen and in which the class struggle would sharpen. On this last issue here is some of what Engels said;

"...To him (Marx), Free Trade is the normal condition of modern capitalist production. Only under Free Trade can the immense productive powers of steam, of electricity, of machinery, be fully developed; and the quicker the pace of this development, the sooner and the more fully will be realized its inevitable results; society splits up into two classes, capitalist here, wage-labourers there; hereditary wealth on one side, hereditary poverty on the other..." ("Protection and Free Trade" - Published in *Neue Zeit* in July 1888, reprinted in *Marx and Engels on Colonialism*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1968, p.268)

In summarizing a speech by Marx, Engels also writes; "Thus you have to choose: Either you must disavow the whole of political economy as it exists at present, or you must allow that under the freedom of trade the whole severity of the laws of political economy will be applied to the working classes. [And Marx and Engels wrote quite fervently on the conditions they expected to ensue for the working classes from the victory of free trade - i.e. increase competition among

the working class, a decided lowering of wages to the level of simply another commodity, the literal death of many workers engaged in manual production, and more - Julie]. Is that to say that we are against Free Trade? Now, we are for Free Trade, because by Free Trade all economical laws, with their most astounding contradictions, will act upon a larger scale, upon a greater extent of territory, upon the territory of the whole earth; and because from the uniting of all these contradictions into a single group, where they stand face to face, will result the struggle which will eventuate in the emancipation of the proletarians." (from *The Free Trade Congress at Brussels* - first published in *the Northern Star* No. 520, October 9, 1847 - reprinted in *Karl Marx-Frederick Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 6, p. 290)

Engels, however, in relation to the same debates in Europe on free trade, wrote in support of protectionism in Germany. Marx also spoke favourably of it. Engels did this because he thought that German protectionism developed conditions for the unhampered domination of industrial capital, the defeat of the feudal and aristocratic capitalists and the conditions for the development of the class struggle between the capitalists and the working class.

"Since, however, as has been said above, the bourgeoisie in Germany, requires protection against foreign countries in order to clear away the medieval remnants of a feudal aristocracy and the modern vermin by the Grace of God, and to develop purely and simply its most innermost essence(!) - then the working class also has an interest in what helps the bourgeoisie to unimpeded rule.

"Not until only one class - the bourgeoisie - is seen to exploit and oppress, until penury and misery can no longer be blamed now on this estate, now on that, or simply on the absolute monarchy and its bureaucrats - only then will the last decisive battle break out, the battle between the propertied and the propertyless, between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat." (from "Protective Tariffs or Free Trade System" first published in the *deutsche-Brusseler-Zeitung* no. 46, June 10, 1847 - reprinted in *Karl Marx-Frederick Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 6, p. 94)

I apologize for these long quotes. I think, however, they are quite useful in provoking thought. The issue of NAFTA can not be solved on general theoretical grounds. I worry that Kate is trying to do so. Her statement would indicate a rather one-sided interpretation of the theoretical questions involved.

To me a reading of Marx and Engels should raise various questions to think about. Does NAFTA provide the conditions for the most modern means of capitalist production? What classes or sections of classes does it benefit? After all, both the U.S. and Mexico are capitalist countries. I find no evidence of an issue of the defeat of feudal, aristocratic classes. And modern means of production were already in effect. Are the economic and political consequences under NAFTA so devastating that they necessitate a campaign against them similar to our agitation against Reaganomics? Is NAFTA in reality a form of protectionism, and should it be opposed on that basis? After all, various articles in *The Workers' Advocate* argued that part of the aim of NAFTA was to prepare for trade wars with Japan and the European Economic Community. Is NAFTA provoking conditions in which class contradictions will sharpen and be brought to the fore, thus developing the conditions for a proletarian social revolution? I have only partial views on these questions. That is because I haven't done enough research myself, nor have I seen the work from others in this debate that would answer these questions.

HOW MARX AND ENGELS VIEWED THE HISTORICAL ROLE OF COLONIALISM

I don't think various political questions can be solved just from the theoretical angle. Nevertheless, I think a study of theory is useful. I think a one-sided view towards Marxism is taking hold among many former comrades. It goes something like this.

- 1) Capitalism means development.
- 2) Capitalist development is a prerequisite to any further social revolution.
- 3) Therefore capitalist development is good.

This approach goes under the guise

of adherence to Marxism. But it is actually rather one-sided. An approach towards studying the depth and range of the views of Marx and Engels and other socialist theorists is gone.

In hopes of shedding some light on the question I did a study of various of Marx and Engels' writing on the historical role of colonialism and would like to present it here. A study of their views is very useful. This is not because their discussions apply in a one to one fashion today. No, it is because they had a scientific materialist outlook in their studies and discussions. They attempted to grasp the laws behind economic and political developments. They worked to expose the class relations behind various struggles, to explain what they meant for historical development. They fought for the working class to have its own stand and role in the various struggles. A grasp of their perspectives is very useful for any study to understand the current workings of capitalism.

What was Marx and Engels' perspective on colonialism? They looked at colonialism as a historical process and studied its economic and political basis, "how these institutions arose, why they existed, and what role they have played in history." (Marx and Engels on Colonialism Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1968)

Marx and Engels did consider that colonialism cleared the path for the development of capitalism in the colonies and thus the proletariat, the proletarian class struggle and the socialist revolution. Marx discusses this question in an article entitled "The future results of the British Rule in India." (Published in the *New York Daily Tribune*, No. 3840, August 8, 1853, op. cit., p.82). "England has to fulfill a double mission in India: one destructive, the other regenerating - the annihilation of old Asiatic society, and the laying of the material foundations of Western society in Asia.

"Arabs, Turks, Tartars, Moguls, who had successively overrun India, soon became Hinduized, the barbarian conquerors being, by an eternal law of history, conquered themselves by the superior civilization of their subjects. The British were the first conquerors superior, and therefore, inaccessible to Hindu civi-

lization. They destroyed it by breaking up the native communities, by uprooting the native industry, and by leveling all that was great and elevated in the native society. The historic pages of their rule in India report hardly anything beyond that destruction. The work of regeneration hardly transpires through a heap of ruins. Nevertheless it has begun. ...

"The political unity of India, more consolidated and extending farther than it ever did under the Great Moguls, was the first condition of its regeneration. That unity, imposed by the British sword, will now be strengthened and perpetuated by the electric telegraph. The native army, organized and trained by the British drill-sergeant, was the *sine qua non* of Indian self-emancipation, and of India ceasing to be the prey of the first foreign intruder. The free press, introduced for the first time in to Asiatic society, and managed principally by the common offspring of Hindus and Europeans is a new and powerful agent of reconstruction. The *zeminadari* and *ryotwari* themselves, abominable as they are, involve two distinct forms of private property in land - the great desideratum of Asiatic society. From the Indian natives, reluctantly and sparingly educated at Calcutta, under English superintendence, a fresh class is springing up, endowed with the requirements for government and imbued with European science. Steam has brought India into regular and rapid communication with Europe, has connected its chief ports with those of the whole southeastern ocean, and has revindicated it from he isolated position which was the prime law of its stagnation." (op. cit., pp. 81-82).

He then goes on to discuss many of the devastating consequences of the British rule in India. He says, "The devastating effects of English industry, when contemplated with regard to India, a country as vast as Europe, and containing 150 millions of acres, are palpable and confounding. But we must not forget that they are only the organic results of the whole system of production as it is now constituted. That production rests on the supreme rule of capital... The bourgeois period of history has to create the material basis of the new world - on the one hand the universal intercourse founded upon the mutual dependency of

mankind, and the means of that intercourse; on the other hand the development of the productive powers of man and the transformation of material production into a scientific domination of natural agencies." (op. cit., pp. 86-87)

Then he goes on to say, "Bourgeois industry and commerce create these material conditions of a new world in the same way as geological revolutions have created the surface of the earth. When a great social revolution shall have mastered the results of the bourgeois epoch, the market of the world and modern powers of production, and subjected then to the common control of the most advanced peoples, then only will human progress cease to resemble that hideous pagan idol, who would not drink the nectar but from the skulls of the slain." (op. cit., p. 87)

In discussing this historical feature of colonialism Marx and Engels didn't rave about development of production. They soberly assessed that capitalism clears the way for development of socialism. Yet they considered that such development of "universal intercourse", such development of "productive powers" was a painful process indeed. It came about by much destruction, disease, drug addiction, etc.

Look at this discussion of the subjugation of India from "The British Rule in India" (Published in the *New York Daily Tribune*, No. 3804, June 25, 1853, op. cit., p. 36ff)

"There cannot, however, remain any doubt but that the misery inflicted by the British on Hindustan is of an essentially different and infinitely more intensive kind than all Hindustan had to suffer before...

"All the civil wars, invasions, revolutions, conquests, famines, strangely complex, rapid and destructive as the successive action in Hindustan may appear, did not go deeper than its surface. England has broken down the entire framework of Indian society, without any symptoms or reconstitution yet appearing. This loss of his old world, with no gain of a new one, imparts a particular kind of melancholy to the present misery of the Hindu, and separates Hindustan, ruled by Britain, from all its ancient traditions, and from the whole of its past history."

Marx then goes on to discuss various features of the breakdown of the village system in India and says further, "No, sickening as it must be to human feeling to witness those myriads of industrious patriarchal and inoffensive social organizations disorganized and dissolved into their units, thrown into a sea of woes, and their individual members losing at the same time their ancient form of civilization and their hereditary means of subsistence, we must not forget that these idyllic village communities, inoffensive though they may appear, had always been the solid foundation of Oriental despotism, that they restrained the human mind within the smallest possible compass, making it the unresisting tool of superstition, enslaving it beneath traditional rules, depriving it of all grandeur and historical energies. We must not forget the barbarian egotism which, concentrating on some miserable patch of land, had quietly witnessed the ruin of empires, the perpetuation of unspeakable cruelties, the massacre of the population of large towns, with no other consideration bestowed upon them than on natural events, itself the helpless prey of any aggressor who deigned to notice it at all. We must not forget that this undignified, stagnatory, and vegetative life, that this passive sort of existence evoked on the other part, in contradistinction, wild, aimless, unbounded forces of destruction, and rendered murder itself a religious rite in Hindustan. We must not forget that these little communities were contaminated by distinctions of caste and slavery, that they subjugated man to external circumstance instead of elevating man to be the sovereign of circumstances, that they transformed a self-developing social state into never changing natural destiny, and thus brought about a brutalizing worship of nature, exhibiting its degradation in the fact that man, the sovereign of nature, fell down on his knees in adoration of Hanuman, the monkey, and Sabbala, the cow.

"England, it is true, in causing a social revolution in Hindustan, was actuated only by the vilest interests, and was stupid on her manner of enforcing them. But that is not the question. The question is, can mankind fulfill its destiny without a fundamental revolution in the

social state of Asia? If not, whatever may have been the crimes of England she was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about that revolution." (op. cit., pp. 36-41)

Here is a rather sharp discussion of what Marx and Engels considered to be "progressive" about colonialism. Colonialism broke down the ancient social relations, developed capitalist social relations, broke down village isolation and developed universal intercourse. Without this, they considered that there would be no possibility of a further social revolution. But they had no illusions as to the benefits such development would bring. They recognized that it was frequently done with much destruction. For instance, such development frequently destroyed the previous subsistence economies while bringing most people no new economy.

Thus in an article entitled "India" (Published in the *New York Daily Tribune* No. 3838, August 5, 1853, op. cit. pp. 77-80), Marx describes how nearly 3/4 of the whole net revenue to England from India came from the land. He described the zemindari and the ryotwari land systems imposed by the British. After describing how these systems work he says:

"Thus in Bengal, we have a combination of English landlordism, of the Irish middleman system, of the Austrian system, transforming the landlord in the taxgatherer, and the Asiatic system making the state the real landlord. In Madras and Bombay we have a French peasant proprietor who is at the same time a serf, and a *metayer* of the State. The drawbacks of all these various systems accumulate upon him without his enjoying any of their redeeming features. The ryot is subject, like the French peasant, to the extortion of the private usurer; but he has no hereditary, no permanent title in his land, like the French peasant. Like the serf his is forced to cultivation, but he is not secured against want like the serf. Like the *metayer* he has to divide his produce with the State, but the State is not obliged, with regard to him, to advance the funds and stocks, as it is obliged to do with regard to the *metayer*. In Bengal, as in Madras and Bombay under the *zemindari* as under the *ryotwari*, the ryots - and they form 11/12ths of the

whole Indian population - have been wretchedly pauperized;..."

He then goes on to note, "the zemindar tenure, the ryotwar, and the salt tax, combined with the Indian climate, were the hotbeds of the cholera - India's ravages upon the Western World - a striking and severe example of the solidarity of human woes and wrongs." (op. cit., p. 80)

Marx viewed that the breakdown of the old village system to be important and necessary. But he hardly regarded its replacement as a model of development. Instead he was given to a concrete and detailed assessment of what was torn down, what replaced it and what that meant for class relations and the class struggle.

HOW MARX VIEWED "THE MOST MODERN MEANS OF COMMUNICATION" OF HIS DAY

Marx and Engels at times discussed that the imposition of the most modern means of production on the colonies and semi-colonies might mean an improvement in the agriculture or industry. They discussed each situation based on its own factors - the political and economic issues involved. It would be instructive to review some of their discussion of the effect that railroads - some of the most modern technology of the time - would have in India and China.

In the following passage Marx seems to think that the building of railroads in India would mean developments in the agriculture and industry of India as well as further break down the village system. (from "The Future Results of the British Rule in India", op. cit., pp. 81-87)

"The ruling classes of Great Britain have had, till now, but an accidental, transitory and exceptional interest in the progress of India. The aristocracy wanted to conquer it, the moneyocracy to plunder it, and the millocracy to undersell it. But now the tables are turned. The millocracy have discovered that the transformation of India into a reproductive country has become of vital importance to them, and that, to that end, it is necessary, above all, to gift her with means of irrigation and of internal communication. They intend now drawing a net of rail-

ways over India. And they will do it. The results must be inappreciable.

"It is notorious that the productive powers of India are paralyzed by the utter want of means for conveying and exchanging its various produce. Nowhere, more than in India, do we meet with social destitution in the midst of natural plenty, for want of the means of exchange...

"The introduction of railways may be easily made to subserve agricultural purposes by the formation of tanks, where ground is required for embankment, and by the conveyance of water along different lines. Thus irrigation, the *sine qua non* of farming in the East, might be greatly extended, and the frequently recurring local famines, arising from the want of water, would be averted. The general importance of railways, viewed under this head, must become evident, when we remember that irrigated lands, even in the districts near Ghauts, pay three times as much in taxes, afford ten or twelve times as much employment and yield twelve of fifteen times as much profit, as the same area without irrigation.

"Railways will afford the means of diminishing the amount and cost of military establishments..

"We know that the municipal organization and the economical basis of the village communities have been broken up, but their worst feature, the dissolution of society into stereotype and disconnected atoms, has survived their vitality. The village isolation produced the absence of roads in India, and the absence of roads perpetrated the village isolation. On this plan a community existed with a given scale of low conveniences, almost without intercourse with other villages, without the desires and efforts indispensable to social advance. The British having broken up this self-sufficient *inertia* of the the villages, railways will provide the new want of communication and intercourse....

"I know that the English millocracy intend to endow India with railways with the exclusive view of extracting at diminished expenses the cotton and other raw materials for their manufactures. But when you have once introduced machinery into the locomotion of a country, which possesses iron and coals, you are unable to withhold it from its fabrication.

You cannot maintain a net of railways over an immense country without introducing all those industrial processes necessary to meet the immediate and current wants of railway locomotion, and out of which there must grow the application of machinery to those branches of industry not immediately connected with railways. The railway system will therefore become, in India, truly the forerunner of modern industry. ...

"Modern industry, resulting from the railway system, will dissolve the hereditary divisions of labor, upon which rest the Indian castes, those decisive impediments to Indian progress and Indian power.

"All the English bourgeoisie may be forced to do will neither emancipate nor materially mend the social condition of the mass of the people, depending not only on the development of the productive powers, but on their appropriation by the people. But what they will not fail to do is to lay down the material premises for both. Has the bourgeoisie ever done more? Has it ever effected a progress without dragging individuals and peoples through blood and dirt, through misery and degradation.?" (op. cit., pp. 83-85)

In these comments on India, Marx expected the railroads to bring various developments, because of the need of a rail industry to support them. I should note that this assessment by Marx is somewhat controversial. Later writers have disputed that the railroads built by the British in India brought the developments Marx predicted.

Yet what is clear is that Marx attempted a concrete assessment of exactly what various economic and political measures would mean. And, in this instance too, he cautions that railroads will not mend the social conditions of the masses.

This passage in a letter to Danielson in 1879 further illustrates these aspects of Marx's analysis. Was he opposed to the development of railroads? No. He considered this development to be of great significance. In this passage he discusses railroads as being extremely important in developing the concentration of capital, the development of international exchange. He considered that railroads forced the enlargement of the capi-

talist superstructure in various countries. He saw that railroads intensified capitalist social relations. But he is quite emphatic that this development does not mean in any way mending the social conditions of the masses. In fact, in many ways it is quite destructive.

"The railways sprang up first as the *couronnement de l'oeuvre* in those countries where *modern industry was most developed*, England, United States, Belgium, France, etc. I call them the "*couronnement de l'oeuvre*" not only in the sense that they were at last (together with steamships for oceanic intercourse and the telegraphs) the *means of communication* adequate to the modern means of production, but also in so far as they were the basis of immense joint stock companies, forming at the same time a new starting point for all *other sorts* of joint stock companies, to commerce by banking companies. They gave in one word, an impetus never before suspected to the *concentration of capital*, and also to the accelerated and immensely *enlarged cosmopolitan activity of loanable capital*, thus embracing the whole world in a network of financial swindling and mutual indebtedness, the capitalist form of "international" brotherhood.

"On the other hand, the appearance of the railway system in the leading countries of capitalism allowed, and even forced, states where capitalism was confined to a few summits of society, to suddenly create and enlarge their capitalist *superstructure* in dimensions altogether disproportionate to the bulk of the social body, carrying on the great work of production in the traditional modes. There is, therefore, not the last doubt that in those states the railway creation has accelerated the social and political disintegration...."

It is possible that in this section of the letter he is revising his earlier thoughts on the results that railroads would bring to India or countries similar to India.

"Generally the the railways gave of course an immense impulse to the development of foreign commerce, but the commerce in countries which export principally *raw produce* increased the misery of the masses. Not only that the new indebtedness, contracted by the government on account of the railways, increased

the *bulk of imposts* weighing upon them, but from the moment every local production could be converted into cosmopolitan gold, many articles *formerly cheap*, because invendible to a great degree, such as fruit, wine, fish, deer, etc., became *dear* and were withdrawn from the consumption of the people, while on the other hand, the *production itself*, I mean the *special sort of produce*, was changed according to its *greater or minor suitability for exportation*, while formerly it was principally adapted to its consumption *in loco*. Thus, for instance, in Schleswig-Holstein agricultural land was converted into pasture, because the export of cattle was more profitable, but at the same time the agricultural population was driven away. All the changes were very useful indeed for the great landed proprietor, the usurer, the merchant, the railways, the bankers and so forth, but very dismal for the real producer!" (Letter to D.F. Danielson, 10 April 1879, from Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels Correspondence 1846-1895, International Publishers, 1935, pp.358-360)

Then there are these comments by Engels in regards to the development of railroads in China,

"...Look at England, the last new market which could bring on a temporary revival of prosperity by its being thrown open to English commerce, is China. Therefore English capital insists upon constructing Chinese railways. But Chinese railways mean the destruction of the whole basis of Chinese small agriculture and domestic industry, and, as there will not even be the counterpoise of a Chinese *grande industrie*, hundreds of millions of people will be placed in the impossibility of living. The consequence will be a wholesale emigration such as the world has not yet seen, a flooding of America, Asia and Europe by the hated Chinaman, a competition for work with the American, Australian and European workman on the basis of the Chinese standard of life, the lowest of all - and if the system of production has not been changed in Europe before that time, it will have to be changed then." (Engels to N.F. Danielson, Sept. 22, 1892, op. cit., p. 345)

Here I see no call that the Indian workers or the Chinese workers and peas-

ants or the international working class should simply hail the development of railroads. Marx and Engels certainly recognized the tremendous significance of railroads in continuing and intensifying the development of commerce, production, the international market and capitalist social relations. Yet they were always mindful of its destructive effects and thinking of the consequences of capitalism with the view of developing the struggle against it.

I would wish today that some of our former comrades, when thinking about and writing about the consequences of the latest round in the development of communication under capitalism - computer technology, etc., would take such a sober approach in discussion of its effects and consequences and meaning for the class struggle.

I apologize for these rather long quotes. But I think we can see here that Marx and Engels were not given to enthralment over the possibilities of the productive powers of capitalism. They regarded colonialism as an objective process. They thought it brought immense suffering and destruction to the masses of the people. They didn't think colonialist development would necessarily lift up the material conditions of the masses. It frequently brought famine and disease as the traditional subsistence economies were broken up.

Yet they realized that colonialism developed capitalism and that this was laying the preconditions for a future socialism.

They did not counsel the people of the colonies that they should sit back and peacefully accept the wonders of development, that they should not consider the ways to struggle against all the effects of the colonial system and the colonial system itself.

I hope that all our former comrades will consider these perspectives of Marx and Engels when studying the current world situation. Today we see more intensification of "universal intercourse" and "development of productive powers", along with the economies of whole countries being allowed to rot and collapse before our very eyes. Are we to

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