

DEDICATED TO MARXISM-LENINISM-MAO TSETUNG THOUGHT AND ITS APPLICATION TO THE CONCRETE CONDITIONS OF THE UNITED STATES



IN HONOR OF CHOU EN-LAI

Chou En-lai, the great Chinese Marxist-Leninist and statesman, close comrade-in-arms of the late Chairman Mao Tse-tung, died a year ago Jan. 8. As Premier of China, he faithfully and creatively carried out Chairman Mao's revolutionary line in foreign policy. The "gang of four," which slandered Chou and tried to overthrow him during his lifetime, waged a campaign to suppress his memory after his death, and to prevent people from expressing their grief. The "gang's" ouster, led by Chairman Hua Kuo-feng, has restored to Chou's memory its rightful place of honor.

WHAT DOES A PARTY DO?

Our movement's debate over what sort of work the Party must mainly engage in has got stuck in a rut, with a Right-opportunist line of "economic agitation as chief form of activity" on the one side and a "Left" dogmatist line of "propaganda as chief form" on the other. Both of them separate the ultimate aim from the everyday struggle. The chief form of activity of a Party of the Leninist type is political agitation for the immediate strategic aim of the working-class movement in this country: the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The question of agitation and propaganda has been discussed in our movement for quite some time without being resolved in a satisfactory way. It is an important question for party-building. It bears both on basic issues of ideological and political line and on the question of the forms of party organization. To reach clarity on this question is an essential step toward the unification of Marxist-Leninists on a principled basis.

What, mainly, does a Party do? What kind of work should most of its cadre mainly be engaged in, during this general period? On what tasks should the Party organization concentrate its forces? These are the basic practical questions which a study of the Leninist theory of propaganda and agitation is aimed at answering.

(I) THEORY, PROPAGANDA, AGITATION AND MASS ACTION

When confronted with the terms "theory," "propaganda," "agitation" and "mass action," many comrades mentally draw a dividing line down the middle of these four terms, this way: "theory," they say, belongs together with "propaganda"; and "agitation" belongs together with "mass action." In this way of approaching the question of "propaganda" and "agitation" lies the root of all other confusion on this matter, and we must start therefore with this basic point.

The immediate source of this way of presenting the question of "agitation" and "propaganda" lies in the recent historical experience of our movement. In the early 1970s, a Right opportunist line on party-building temporarily gained dominance in our movement, which formally de-

nied that building the party was the central task of all work, and laid the emphasis instead on "building the mass movement." Led by the RU, this trend taught the mass of the cadre to make "agitation" for the immediate, everyday demands of the workers their chief form of activity, and developed a literature (the local "Worker" papers) that reflects this priority. In reaction against this line, a line of "economic agitation as chief form of activity," there developed in 1973-74 the so-called "theory trend" (PRRWO and a number of others), which inscribed the slogan of "propaganda as chief form of activity" in its banner. Despite the many developments that have taken place in each of these trends, and in the relation between them, the presentation of the question has not fundamentally advanced since then. Nothing is more 'natural,' more 'spontaneous,' therefore, than the mental segregation of "agitation" with action on the one side and of

(Continued on p. 2)

EDITORIAL: THEIR PESSIMISM AND OUR AGITATION

Mr. Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Carter's new national security adviser, told a Los Angeles Times interviewer late in January that the "social-political elite" which has been running the country since at least World War I is today "fractured, disintegrated, and ... has lost its own sense of legitimacy." The ruling "WASP, Ivy League-trained, Wall Street based Establishment," Brzezinski predicted, will last only another "ten years or so, maybe even 15 years."

Premonitions of doom on the part of the ruling class are not new in this century. Lord Keynes, whose economic theories are wrongly credited with saving capitalism in the 1930s, once answered an objection to the long-term workability of his ideas by saying "In the long run, we are all dead." Henry Kissinger, too, was allured by philosophical musings about the decline of "civilization," read the "civilization" of the ruling class. But none of these previous pessimists, so far as we know, has given the ruling class so short a life expectancy as the man who is now in charge of its security.

This very cheery piece of information provides all the more reason why the Marxist-Leninist movement in this country should get on with the task of political agitation for the dictatorship of the proletariat. The pessimism of the ruling class is grounds for greater optimism in the working class. We must approach every event and every

question with the determination that the working class shall become -- perhaps in only ten to 15 years, if Mr. Brzezinski is correct -- the ruling class of the United States.

The major part of this issue of M-L FORWARD, as was promised in No. 1, is devoted to setting forth the case why political agitation -- rather than propaganda or economic agitation -- should be the chief form of activity of the single, unified Party of the U.S. proletariat, guided by Marxism-Leninism-Mao-Tsetung Thought, toward which all sections of our movement strive. At a time when there is considerable theoretical and practical ferment in our movement on this question, a pamphlet-length treatment of the topic appears more than warranted. The advocates of the line of "propaganda" (in the strict sense) as chief form of activity, against whose views the main thrust of this pamphlet is directed, should be the last to complain that their own preferred form is here being utilized against them.

This polemic, taking aim against the sham "Left" in our ranks, and against the theoretically unstable elements who capitulate to it, will be of all the more interest inasmuch as the "propaganda" trend is in the process presently of questioning and re-examining many of its old assumptions.

Last summer and fall, it was said without fear of contradiction that the line of "propaganda as chief form of activi-

ty" had become the dominant line in our movement. At the same time, however, a counter-current among those who held the "propaganda" line was beginning to take shape. The process of deepening the struggle against the "propaganda only" line was leading a number of comrades to a discovery of some of the weaknesses of the slick city cousin of "propaganda only," namely the line of "propaganda chiefly" espoused by WVO.

Thus, at the present moment, the former ideological alignments are changing rapidly. Among the straws in the wind are the following:

Revolutionary Cause, the organ of ATM, announced in its issue No. 10 last year that a newspaper which wishes to function as a collective organizer must be devoted chiefly to political agitation rather than to propaganda. Evidently reflecting internal struggle over the question -- ATM in late 1975 formed part of the "Revolutionary Wing" -- ATM's theoretical journal Red Banner (No. 1, Jan. 1977), reaffirmed the new direction even though "there will no doubt be some comrades who will adopt a less than enthusiastic attitude toward our decision."

In a similar vein, MLOC reports in its organ Unite! of Feb. 1977 on the conclusion of

a lengthy struggle against a "Left" opportunist deviation in its ranks. MLOC, formerly a critical sympathizer of much of the "Wing's" orientation, now identifies "Propaganda is the chief form of activity" as one of the theses of the "Left" deviation, and explicitly repudiates it.

The Klonsky circle too, which jumped on the "propaganda" bandwagon suddenly last summer -- just at the moment when more thoughtful Marxist-Leninists were beginning to abandon it -- has now issued an equally sudden "clarification," to which this issue of M-L FORWARD devotes a brief commentary (see p. 19: "People Devoid of All Principle").

Even within the sphere of influence of WVO, which has so much of its "prestige" invested in the "propaganda chiefly" line that change will be hard, there are some collectives who are less than mesmerized by the "brilliance" of this line, who grasp enough Marxism-Leninism to see through some of the shoddy work that WVO presents in its defense. We may well see the "propaganda chiefly" line quietly fade from the pages of current WVO literature in the months ahead.

(Continued on Back Page)

**How the RCP has restored Social-Democracy
and what this means... (Once more on RP7)
See Back Page**

WHAT DOES A M-L PARTY DO?

(Continued from Front Page)

"propaganda" with theory, on the other. This mental reflex only reflects what has grown up in practice: an empiricist trend on the one side, a dogmatist trend on the other. A number of attempts to forge a Leninist position in the teeth of both deviations -- and there lies the only possible road forward -- have so far not made decisive breakthroughs. Their chief pitfall has been eclecticism in method, i.e. the error of trying to combine the elements of a Leninist line with the main theses of both the Economist and the dogmatist trends; the only possible outcome of such attempts is to bury Leninism even more deeply under a potpourri of theoretical gibberish. We have in mind the OL-LMLU line, of which more later.

In order to break down the mental stereotype which segregates "theory" and "propaganda" together on one side, with "mass action" and "agitation" on the other, three things are necessary. The first is to point out the difference between theory and propaganda; the second is to break down the facile identification of "agitation" with "calling on the masses to take action," and the third is to identify and to emphasize the aspect of unity, of identity even, between agitation and propaganda. Only then is it possible to speak without getting lost about the aspect of difference between agitation and propaganda and about the other, related questions.

Many comrades loosely identify "theory" with "propaganda work" because the so-called "theory trend" proclaims "propaganda as chief form of the party's activity in the first main period of party-building." The "theoreticians" of the "theory trend" themselves -- or at least some of them -- imagine that their contribution in organizing propaganda circles (and forums attended by members of propaganda circles) is to raise the level of theory.

The most polite response that can be made to this claim is a skeptical "It ain't necessarily so." Whether a propagandist is raising the level of theory in our movement with his propaganda work depends on whether the propagandist has a theory to begin with, and -- of course on whether that theory is correct. The propagandist who imagines that propaganda work is theoretical work should be reminded that Lenin, in presenting the question of the relation between theory, propaganda and agitation, drew a sharp line of distinction not between theory-and-propaganda on the one side, and agitation on the other, but rather between theory on the one side, and propaganda-and-agitation on the other. He groups propaganda and agitation together under the common heading of "practical work":

"In thus emphasizing the necessity, importance and immensity of the theoretical work of the Social-Democrats, I by no means want to say that this work should take precedence over PRACTICAL work, -- still less that the latter should be postponed until the former is completed.... On the contrary, the practical work of propaganda and agitation must always take precedence, because, firstly, theoretical work only supplies answers to the problems raised by practical work, and, secondly, the Social-Democrats, for reasons over which they have no control, are so often compelled to confine themselves to theoretical work that they value highly every moment when practical work is possible."

("What the Friends of the People Are" in Lenin Collected Works (CW) Vol. 1, pp. 297-298, emphasis added.)

SERIOUS THEORETICAL CONFUSION

This presentation of the question shows that the comrades who imagine that they are theoreticians because they are propagandists are guilty of a serious theoretical confusion. Propaganda work is a form of "practical work," just as agitation is; it is not the same as theoretical work, any more than agitation is the same as theoretical work.

What follows? Should we pat the advocates of the line of "propaganda as the only form of activity" (-- the line openly advocated for a period of time by PRRWO-RWL--), on the back for their great "practical-

ness"? On the contrary, we should criticize them for (among other things!) forgetting that the Leninist warning against practical work that stumbles in the dark applies also to propaganda work, just as much as it does to agitation.

Everyone, especially our "theoreticians," is familiar with Stalin's statement that "practice gropes in the dark if its path is not illumined by revolutionary theory." But how many of our propagandists realize that the danger of empiricism is just as real in the practical work of propaganda as in any other sort of practical work? That propaganda, too, gropes in the dark if its path is not illumined by revolutionary theory?

But don't we have Marxist theory? ask these propagandists. Don't we have the classic works of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-tung Thought, the 45 volumes, the 13 volumes and the 4 volumes? Yes, we have; and some of our propagandists have read them all, which is a good thing and not a bad thing. Still, it is not enough to have studied the classic works; one must also have applied the lessons of these works to the concrete conditions of our time and place. To study and to learn the general truths, the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism is not yet doing theoretical work. To apply these general truths to the correct solution of the problems that arise in the course of practical work in the given concrete circumstances, to light up the path which practice must follow and can follow -- such is theoretical work. In the absence of this theoretical work, the propagandist is condemned to stumbling in the dark just as much as the agitator. Only, this groping takes a different form, the form of mindless quote-mongering and phrase-mongering, instead of the form of mindless "practice-mongering," as with the benighted agitator. The form assumed by the empiricism of the propagandist is dogmatism.

An outstanding example of such propaganda without theory was the "Revolutionary Wing," a coalition of groups that formed in the late fall of 1975 and blew up in February 1976. One of the points of unity of this bloc was the line that "propaganda is the chief form of activity." Yet, as the struggle shortly revealed, this amalgam of propagandists did not have a line on many of the most important concrete questions of the U.S. revolution. The grouping was marked, to quote Resistencia, by "the absence of a clear and defined political line ... on fundamental issues such as strategy and tactics, the national question, the woman question, the trade union question, the struggle for reforms..." etc. (Resistencia Vol. 7 No. 3.) What does it mean, to have no "clear and defined political line"? It means that, for all their study of the 45 volumes and the 13 volumes and the 4 volumes, these propagandists had no theory. They had not undertaken, or not sufficiently or not correctly, the work of applying the general truths of Marxism-Leninism to the concrete conditions. For all their shining and shouting, they were still groping in the dark. How can such propaganda cure the malady of empiricism, of mindless "agitation"? It is itself mindless, itself empiricist. It cannot cure empiricism, it can only transform it into dogmatism. By blurring over the distinction between real theoretical work and the practical work of propaganda, -- by pretending that propaganda work is theoretical work -- these comrades actually downgrade and help to kill off genuine Marxist-Leninist theoretical work just as much as the crude empiricists, the Right opportunists, do. Following the breakup of the "Revolutionary Wing" and the utter degeneration of its leading forces (PRRWO and RWL), many comrades who were once deeply influenced by this trend are coming to understand this.

And what shall we say to comrades who reason that the solution to the problem of theoretical unclarity, which hampers practical work, is "more propaganda"? We should say to them that propaganda is a form of practical work, and that this form of work can help to overcome the problem of theoretical unclarity only if theoretical clarity has first been reached. If the theoretical work necessary to solve the problems arising in practice has been accomplished, or basically and in the main accomplished, then propaganda, by disseminating the results of that theoretical work, can indeed

help to bring about theoretical clarity. But if the theoretical tasks are still in the main undone, then no amount of propaganda can cure the theoretical confusion. It can only disguise the prevalence of confusion, and divert forces away from overcoming it.

THEORY GUIDES PRACTICE

Propaganda, like agitation, is practical work which must take its guidance from correct theory. But theory, as Stalin also pointed out, "becomes purposeless if it is not connected with revolutionary practice." To what questions should theoretical work address itself? Posed in the abstract, this question is capable of being answered in an infinite number of ways; that is to say, it cannot be answered concretely. There are no questions in the world which Marxist theory cannot elucidate. Which particular questions should have priority at any given moment? Many intellectuals who have studied some Marxism and want to use the Marxist method to solve problems do not know how to answer this question. Their theory becomes an ornament, something they value "for its own sake." The RCP today, which in the last few years has inducted quite a few academic Marxists into its ranks, and which has lately decided to give itself "theoretical" airs, is now cultivating, on the surface of its unaltered Economism, this kind of "theory for its own sake." This sort of Marxism, academic Marxism, is no Marxism at all. It ignores the essence of Marxism. It sees Marxism as merely another kind of "philosophy," as a form of contemplating the world. It ignores Marx's famous thesis on Feuerbach: "The philosophers have merely interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it." Lenin also pointed out that the task of theoretical work, and its importance, lies in its ability to "supply answers to the problems raised by practical work." The task of Marxist theoretical work, in other words, is to supply answers to the problems raised in the practical work of propaganda, agitation and organization.

To muddle up the distinction between theory and propaganda, therefore, is doubly harmful. It can lead to "theory" divorced from practical work, "theory" without practical consequences; and it promotes propaganda that gropes in the dark, dogmatist propaganda. Theoretical work and propaganda work are not the same. To do theoretical work means to apply the general truths of Marxism-Leninism to the concrete conditions in order to light up the path for practical work. Propaganda is a form -- one of the forms -- of practical work by means of which the results of theoretical work are disseminated. This is the first point.

ACTION BY WORDS

Agitation and propaganda, we said, are both forms of practical work, as distinguished from theoretical work. But such forms of activity as, for example, organizing a demonstration, or organizing and leading a strike, or organizing and leading a proletarian insurrection are clearly also forms of practical work. How, then, are we to distinguish between the practical work of agitation and propaganda, on the one hand, and these other kinds of practical work, on the other?

The answer lies in the means and forces each sets into motion. The practical work of agitation and propaganda relies chiefly on the means of verbal persuasion, and it sets into motion the force of public opinion. Demonstrations, especially if they are large and powerful; strikes; insurrection are also forms of "persuasion," but they rely chiefly on material force for their effect. A big demonstration, march or rally not only leaves an impression on public opinion, it also for a moment brings directly into play the force of masses of people acting for a common purpose. If it is well organized, led and disciplined, very little can stand in its way. A strike deprives the employer of the material force of the workers' labor and of the material gain of profits from the workers' labor; a strong picket line keeps out scabs and prevents the shifting of production. This too is persuasion by material force. The highest form of this persuasion is the organized armed uprising of the exploited and oppressed; it subjects the reactionary regime to the withering criticism of armed force, smashes

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the regime's apparatus of repression and establishes the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat in its place.

The practical work of propaganda and agitation, by itself, clearly, does not exercise this kind of material force. Agitation and propaganda chiefly employ the weaponry of words: the printed word, the spoken word, and such related forms of persuasion as songs, skits, dances, films, pictures, etc.

A few comrades show themselves very impatient with all this, and want to dash off directly into "revolutionary action," even all by themselves or in little conspiratorial groups. Their attitude toward revolutionary propaganda and agitation is that these are "just words." These comrades fail to understand that a genuine revolution can only be made by the masses of the people, not by some handfuls of self-appointed "saviors." Such comrades show a very crude understanding of revolution; it is of them that Lenin spoke when he said:

"Vulgar revolutionism fails to see that words are action, too; this proposition is indisputable when applied to history in general, or to those periods of history when no open political mass action takes place. No putsches of any sort can replace or artificially evoke such action."
("Two Tactics," CW Vol. 9, p. 70)

Agitation and propaganda are action too; and even though the force they set into motion and the means they employ are not so directly and immediately materially devastating, they are no less indispensable, precisely in order to prepare for the time when open revolutionary mass action begins. Are we in such a period now? No, we are not. We are in the period of preparation for the assault, not in the period of the assault itself. Marxist-Leninist "action with words" -- propaganda and agitation -- is the chief kind of revolutionary action that can be conducted in this period, and it must be conducted, persistently, systematically, on the widest possible scale, and within and in connection with every possible organization of the masses, every particular struggle, incident, event, etc. No great revolution has ever been accomplished without a fairly considerable period of preparing public opinion for that revolution. The battle of "words" always precedes and lays the preparations for the battle of "swords."

COMBINED WITH POLITICAL STRUGGLE

Does this mean that "action by words" in preparation for open revolutionary mass action can succeed in its purpose in separation from actual political struggle of any kind? No. To think so would be to fall from the pit of adventurism into the pit of bookishness. "Surely there is no need to prove to Social-Democrats that there can be no political education except through political struggle and political action," Lenin wrote already in 1899. "Surely it cannot be imagined that any sort of study circles or books, etc., can politically educate the masses of workers if they are kept away from political activity and political struggle." ("Apropos of the Profession de Foi," CW Vol. 4, p. 288.) In other words, "action by words" -- agitation and propaganda -- is weak and fails in its educational purpose unless it is linked with political struggle, actual political experience. Verbal persuasion only begins the process of political education; the experience of struggle completes it and gives it deep roots. Although agitation and propaganda, therefore, are the chief means of preparing the conditions for revolution, they are even then not the only means.

PRIORITY IN SECOND PERIOD?

It follows, also, that when the period of preparing for the revolution gives way to the period of open mass political action, both agitation and propaganda -- all forms of "action by words" -- become a subordinate priority for the party's activity. Many comrades do not see this correctly; they imagine that the period of preparation requires chiefly the one kind of verbal persuasion, i.e. propaganda, and that the priority shifts, when the period of open action begins, to the other kind of verbal persuasion, agitation. This is a line which the trend of Klonsky in our

movement has in common with the trend of Tung (WVO). Against these views it must be reiterated that agitation, too, is merely a form of action by words, a form of disseminating ideas, of education, just as is propaganda. What is called for as top priority when the masses are already in motion, when revolutionary clashes have broken out, is not more words, but rather the work of actually organizing and giving direct leadership to proletarian insurrection.

YEARS BEHIND THE TIMES

Lenin forcefully clarified this point for a certain Mr. Struve, a liberal in the guise of a "Marxist," who, at the outbreak of the Russian revolution of 1905, issued slogans calling for "mass propaganda" to "prepare the socio-psychological conditions" for the insurrection. Lenin points out that Mr. Struve is rather late with these slogans; the proper time to issue them was years earlier, before open revolutionary mass action was possible or had begun. The revolutionary trend of Russian Social-Democracy had issued these slogans already five years ago:

"At that time propaganda and agitation, agitation and propaganda were really brought to the fore by the objective state of affairs. At that time work on an all-Russia political newspaper, the weekly publication of which seemed an ideal, could be proposed (and was proposed in What Is To Be Done?) as the touchstone of the work of preparing for an insurrection. At that time slogans advocating mass agitation instead of direct armed action, preparation of the socio-psychological conditions for insurrection instead of pyrotechnics were revolutionary Social-Democracy's only correct slogans. At the present time these slogans have been overtaken by events; the movement has left them behind...."

"Or perhaps I am mistaken? Perhaps the revolution has not yet begun? Perhaps the time has not yet arrived for open political action by the classes? Perhaps there is no civil war yet, and the criticism of weapons should not yet be the necessary and obligatory successor, heir, trustee, and consummator of the weapon of criticism?"

("Two Tactics," CW Vol. 9, p. 71.)

With the outbreak of open revolutionary action, the Bolsheviks therefore issued the slogans to arm the proletariat, take direct leadership of the insurrection, and form a provisional revolutionary government; it was the Russian liberals and the Mensheviks who issued slogans giving priority to "mass propaganda" and agitation. Lenin also does not fail to point out that these same trends opposed the slogan of agitation for insurrection four years earlier, when the revolutionary trend headed by Lenin correctly issued it. When the time was ripe to prepare, they gave priority to the struggle for "palpable demands" instead; and when the time was ripe to act, they gave priority to "preparation." In both cases they were consistent tailists, and Lenin rightly adds that the relatively pardonable lagging of a few years earlier had turned, in the conditions of open revolutionary clashes, into outright criminal treachery and betrayal of the revolution. Such is the inevitable fate of the line that preaches "propaganda as chief form of activity" in the period of preparation, and "agitation as chief form" in the period of mass action. Let the comrades whom this concerns take a timely warning. (We will return to this point below.)

AGITATION AND "CALLING TO ACTION"

An integral part of the Mensheviks' tailist line both in the period of preparation and in the period of mass action is the definition of "agitation" as "calling to action," in the sense of action for definite, concrete measures here and now. The muddling together of "agitation" and "calling to action" is the direct counterpart of the muddling together of "theory" and "propaganda," and these two fallacies play into each others' hands. Since "agitation," in the Menshevik dictionary, means "appealing for action" here and now, it follows that revolutionary agitation is possible only when mass revolutionary action itself has become possible, i.e. only in the "second period," not in the period of preparation. The "agitator," according to the Menshevik cookbook, "calls the masses to action" to realize definite objectives that can be realized here and now; this is his

chief function. It follows that, in the period of preparation, "agitation" must consist chiefly of "calling upon the masses" to undertake struggles for definite reforms, and focusing the attention of the masses on the realization of these reforms. As for focusing the attention of the masses, within the course of everyday events and struggles, on objectives such as revolution, the proletarian dictatorship, which cannot at that moment be put into practice -- which cannot serve as the immediate aim of immediate action by the masses -- this activity, according to the Menshevik language system, is not agitation but "propaganda," and this word is pronounced with a slight sneer. In our movement today, both the more or less open Economist tendency which reduces "agitation" to "calling for action" and the trend that, in attempting to reject this Economism, conceives the period of preparation as chiefly "propaganda" (as distinct from agitation) -- both are taking their recipes from the Economist cookbook.

THE ECONOMIST DEFINITION

Here is how Martynov, then the most outspoken representative of Economism, defines "propaganda" and "agitation." The passage is taken from Lenin's What Is To Be Done, and the material in parentheses is inserted by Lenin:

"Our present definition of the distinction between propaganda and agitation would have to be different from Plekhanov's. (Martynov has just quoted Plekhanov's words: 'A propagandist presents many ideas to one or a few persons; an agitator presents only one or a few ideas, but he presents them to a mass of people.') By propaganda, we would understand the revolutionary explanation of the present social system, entire or in its partial manifestations, whether that be done in a form intelligible to individuals or to broad masses. By agitation, in the strict sense of the word (sic!), we would understand the call upon the masses to undertake definite, concrete actions and the promotion of the direct revolutionary intervention of the proletariat in social life."

(CW Vol. 5, p. 409)

There we have the whole cesspool of opportunism in a nutshell. If you present the ideas of proletarian revolution in a form intelligible to a study circle, to "one or a few persons," this is propaganda work. But if you present the ideas of proletarian revolution in a form intelligible to the broad masses, which (in the language of Plekhanov when he was a Marxist, and in the language of Lenin) is agitation, according to Martynov the Economist, this is "propaganda" too, not agitation. But if you present the ideas of winning immediate demands, reforms, and call on the masses to undertake action to win these reforms, that, according to Martynov, is "agitation."

The presentation of revolutionary ideas in any form and to any audience is "propaganda." The presentation of reformist ideas is "agitation." This is the nub of the Economist views. The possibility of conducting revolutionary agitation in the period of preparation is thereby completely negated. Such is the logic of Menshevism -- a "logic" which both our present-day Right opportunists and our "propagandist" trend accept as their basic premise.

SAME WORDS, DIFFERENT LANGUAGES

Marxist-Leninists and opportunists do not even speak the same language when it comes to propaganda and agitation. Out of the mouths of the disputants come the same words but in their minds are fundamentally different concepts. Take, for example, the concepts of the Klonsky circle. "Propaganda," it says in the "Revolutionary Press," the newsletter of The Call under the M. Klonsky editorship, "is the presentation of many ideas explaining some particular problem...." By contrast, "AGITATION is the act of arousing the masses to political action around some particular issue or social injustice." This definition, issued in Dec. 1974, remains the basic framework of the Klonsky circle's thinking to this day on the agitation-and-propaganda question. It is pure Martynov, pure Economism; it is a parroting of the passage by Martynov which Lenin criticized in What Is To Be Done. How is it possible to reach unity -- or even to

reach clarity on the nature of the disagreements -- with people who, despite having been criticized for it, cling to the Martynov dictionary and refuse to speak the language of Leninism?

What is wrong with the idea that "agitation" means "the call upon the masses to undertake definite, concrete actions" (Martynov) or "arousing the masses to political action around some particular issue or social injustice" (Klonsky)? Two main things.

BREAKS THEORY - ACTION LINK

Firstly, by unjustifiably singling out "agitation" with reference to "action," this terminology implicitly breaks the link that connects propaganda and theory with action as well. What is the point of Marxist theoretical work, if not, indirectly, to arouse the masses to revolutionary political action? "Marxism emphasizes the importance of theory precisely and only because it can guide action," said Chairman Mao in *On Practice*. And the task of the propagandist -- is it not also aimed at promoting the organization of action? Do the theoreticians and the propagandists work "for their health," for the sake of "the beauty of the ideas"? Is concern with action the exclusive privilege of the agitator and organizer? Nonsense. The whole chain of activities, including theoretical work, propaganda, agitation and organization, all of it has mass action as its goal. As Lenin points out in the course of his critique of Martynov's definition, "the call for this action comes indirectly from the theoreticians, the propagandists and the agitators." (CW Vol. 5, p. 410) The agitator has no monopoly on connectedness with action, nor are the theoreticians and propagandists exempt from the necessity of this connection. The Martynov terminology robs theory and propaganda of their connection with action.

Its second major defect is that this definition robs agitation of its connection with Marxist theory and propaganda. During the whole period of preparation for revolution, it unjustifiably reduces the task of the agitator to the presentation of immediate demands. It reduces the agitator to the role of the reformist, the trade union secretary, community organizer or liberal electoral politician. It strips from the agitator what ought to be his chief task during the period of preparation, namely the task of educating the masses, in connection with every event and struggle, in the central ideas of working-class science, of Marxism. To disseminate Marxist theory -- especially the quintessence of Marxism, the dictatorship of the proletariat -- among the masses, to raise the political consciousness of the working class, to prepare public opinion in favor of the future revolutionary storm -- this is the chief task of the Leninist agitator; and of this there is not a hint in the Martynov terminology. Indeed, the Martynov dictionary forbids the agitator to undertake such work at all.

It follows that, in the Economist scheme of things, the training of agitators in Marxist theory can have only a negligible importance. What does an agitator need to know about Marxist theory if his chief task is to arouse the masses to win immediate demands? If the agitator "knows" the theory of trade unionism, of reformism, that is enough equipment for him to graduate from the Martynov school. It goes without saying that an agitator who has been schooled during the entire period of preparation in this sort of "agitation" will prove unequal to his tasks when the period of open mass action sets in.

SPLITS AGITATION, PROPAGANDA

Both agitation and propaganda are aimed at promoting action by the masses; both propaganda and agitation are forms of presenting ideas, of disseminating Marxist theory. Economism violates this basic unity of propaganda and agitation. It splits propaganda off from action; and it cuts the Marxist heart out of agitation. No matter how much Economism may prate about "combining agitation and propaganda," it can do so, at best, only in the most superficial, mechanical way, in forms that reproduce the separation of agitation and propaganda in a different way. (For example, by "combining" economist, reformist "agitation" with sterile, phrasemongering

"propaganda" circles.) For, what is really involved here, at the bottom of the Martynov-Klonsky conceptualizing, is the question of the ultimate aim and the everyday struggle. For Economism, there exists a division of labor between presenting the ultimate aim and promoting the everyday struggle. The former is the "propagandist's" work; the latter the "agitator's," according to opportunism. How, then, are the workers who "go to school" with an organization with such a division of labor to learn the integration of the ultimate aim with the immediate struggle, when neither the "propagandist" a la Martynov nor the "agitator" has mastered this integration? When the "propagandist" is a doctrinaire divorced from the struggle and the "agitator" is mired in the everyday struggle and knows nothing of the ultimate aim? The workers who are enrolled in this kind of "school" -- and such a "school" is our movement -- can learn the integration of the theory of Marxism-Leninism with the everyday practice of the class struggle only by criticizing their teachers and their teachers' philosophy, by demanding a break with opportunist conceptions of agitation and propaganda, and by insisting that both the propagandists and the agitators must be able to explain, in connection with the everyday struggle, the ultimate aim of the historical movement and the road toward it.

BRIEF SUMMARY

Before we go on, a brief summary of the main points made so far. When correctly combined, the work of theory, propaganda, agitation and organization of mass action forms an indissoluble whole. In this chain, theory plays the role of guide and beacon; the organization and leadership of revolutionary mass action to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat is the over-all aim for us. Propaganda and agitation are forms of practical work which serve as a middle link between theory and revolutionary mass action. Both propaganda and agitation are dependent on correct theoretical work, on the application of the general truths of Marxism-Leninism to the concrete conditions. Both agitation and propaganda serve to propagate that theory and to bring about its transformation into practice. Propaganda, no less than agitation, is aimed at bringing about revolutionary action; agitation, no less than propaganda, has the purpose of presenting Marxist ideas, of promoting political education. Both propaganda and agitation are necessary to turn theory into action; both are suitable for explaining the ultimate aim. The chief weapons which the practical work of agitation and propaganda employs are words, verbal persuasion. These instruments must be put into action in good time to prepare for the future period of open mass political action, and even in the necessary period of preparation, agitation and propaganda must not be separated from the experience of political struggle. When the period of open mass revolutionary outbreaks begins, both agitation and propaganda yield pride of place to the "criticism with weapons." The organization, arming and direct organized leadership of proletarian insurrection then becomes the "necessary and obligatory successor, heir, trustee and consummator" (Lenin) of verbal persuasion as the chief means for translating theory into material force, for turning the quintessence of Marxism, the dictatorship of the proletariat, into a living, immediate, palpable reality. Practice then encounters new sets of major problems; theory places new tasks before propaganda, agitation and organization, and so forth in an endless spiral. This is, in general terms, the relation between theory, propaganda, agitation and revolutionary mass action.

"Were not our strikes mere spontaneous outbursts until the revolutionary circles of socialists undertook extensive agitation and summoned the working masses to the class struggle, to the conscious struggle against their oppressors? Can one find in history a single case of a popular movement, of a class movement, that did not begin with spontaneous, unorganized outbursts, that would have assumed an organized form and created political parties without the conscious intervention of enlightened representatives of the given class?"

Lenin, "Apropos of the Profession de Foi," CW Vol. 4, p. 290.

II. AGITATION AND PROPAGANDA -- THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THEM

We have put the emphasis so far on the aspect of unity between propaganda and agitation. Both are forms of practical work, dependent on correct theory; both are forms of propagating, of disseminating that theory and promoting its transformation into organized mass revolutionary action. Our chief target has been the elementary opportunist premise which throws "propaganda" into a box marked "revolutionary theory" on the one side and "agitation" into a strait-jacket of reformism on the other, and thereby breaks up the fundamental political unity of agitation and propaganda and makes their effective practical combination impossible. The mechanical juxtaposition of dogmatism and empiricism, of "revolutionary" phrasemongering with reformism, is the "highest" form of the "combination" of agitation and propaganda which can be erected on this opportunist premise. And there is no need whatever to devote effort to "organizing" such a "combination" at present in our movement; it already exists in abundant surplus.

In order to organize the combination of agitation and propaganda effectively, however, it is necessary not only to grasp the aspect of unity between them, but also the aspect of difference. To this we now turn. In the process we will have to continue the polemics against the "Martynov line" in another one of its aspects, and against its chief present-day derivative in our movement at this moment, the line of "propaganda" -- as distinct from agitation -- as "chief form of activity in the first main period of party-building."

PLEKHANOV'S DEFINITION

As regards the difference between propaganda and agitation, the essential points are all contained in Plekhanov's definition, which Lenin defended against Martynov's attempts to render it "more profound."

"The propagandist," says Plekhanov, presents many ideas to one or a few persons; an agitator presents only one or a few ideas, but he presents them to a mass of people."

Despite and partly because of its great simplicity, this definition has given some people headaches. They poke at it this way and that, trying to make a simple, one-sentence definition accomplish tasks that no such definition can. Is it not possible to present "many ideas" to "a mass of people"? Doesn't it make the agitator seem to have a simpleton's job, since he must present only "one or a few ideas"? What do you call it when you present only one or a few ideas to only one or a few persons? Etc. These and similar quibbles can be briefly answered as follows, by putting the question concretely.

In exceptional circumstances, which rarely if ever arise before the victory of a revolution, it may be possible to organize genuine mass assemblies at which the masses are able and willing to hear the presentation of "many ideas," i.e. of a speech lasting as many hours as is necessary to convey a comprehensive explanation of all the major facets of some problem. If the propagandist making the presentation possessed the exceptional gift of holding the attention of the mass audience for that period of time, it would be a case of real "mass propaganda," something which, by Plekhanov's definition, amounts to a contradiction in terms. In actual practice such occasions very rarely occur, and there was no need whatever to provide for them in the basic definition. In concrete practice, when the propagandist reaches a mass audience, it is almost always through the medium of print, i.e. when the "mass" of the audience is scattered, existing in the form of individual readers or of small groups of readers, not as a mass concentrated in a single place at the same time.

The oral presentation of "many ideas" (as distinct from propaganda in print) involves, as a general practical rule, the organization and leadership of study circles ("propaganda circles"), i.e. of work with "a few persons," or even in one-on-one situations; it also involves the presentation of lectures to more or less select

audiences composed chiefly of members of study circles (as distinct from broad mass audiences). The Bolshevik Party sent such propagandists on travel tours around the country; among the "Minor Resolutions" of the Second Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. is one which "calls the attention of all Party members to the importance of improving the theoretical knowledge of our propagandists and of forming groups of traveling lecturers so as to co-ordinate propaganda throughout the country." (CW Vol. 6, p. 474.) Plekhanov's definition describes these specific and essential features of propaganda as a form of activity as pungently as it is possible to do in half a sentence: the "presentation of many ideas to one or a few persons."

AGITATION "LOWER" THAN PROPAGANDA?

As for agitation, nothing is more revealing of the bourgeois-intellectualist spirit than the notion that agitation is somehow "lower" than propaganda because it involves the presentation of "only one or a few ideas." How many times have we not seen certain people puff themselves up about being "propagandists," how many times have we not heard them pronounce the word "agitation" with a sneer, and assert that "agitation" means "lowering the level" -- only to watch these same "geniuses" fall flat on their faces when it came to presenting clearly and correctly even one single idea before a mass audience? As a matter of fact, in the ranks of our present-day "propagandists" there are more than a few who turned to this line of work because their grasp of Marxist theory was not firm enough to make a success of agitation. The agitator presents "one or a few ideas;" yes -- at any one time; but, in the first place, the agitator must grasp these ideas fully, completely and in a Marxist fashion in order to be able to present them; he must be able to connect them up with the widest possible variety of events and occurrences -- impossible unless the agitator grasps his topic profoundly and in all-sided way --; and he must be able, in the course of time, to present not just one but a great many ideas (a few at a time) -- quite as many as any propagandist.

A HIGHER FORM OF AGITATION

The notion that the work of agitation requires a less solid grasp of Marxism than propaganda -- this ingrained petty-bourgeois academic prejudice -- runs directly counter to the Leninist position. Indeed, this question of the theoretical preparation of agitators was one of the principal points at issue between Lenin and the Economists. For the latter, as we have seen, the scope of "agitation" was confined chiefly to the presentation of immediate demands for reforms. Hence the "agitator" required only the theory of reformism as preparation for the job, with a few socialist phrases for ornamentation. And since the ideology of reformism reproduces itself more or less spontaneously, since its ABC's can be picked up without any formal training whatever, therefore the "theoretical" schooling of the Economist agitator was no big deal. Such agitation was indeed "lowering the level." For Lenin the task was "to try to create a higher form of agitation." The Leninist agitator is a different kind of creature from the Economist species. The ideal of the Leninist agitator is, as Lenin wrote in What Is To Be Done, "the tribune of the people, who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it appears, no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects; who is able to generalise all these manifestations and produce a single picture of police violence and capitalist exploitation; who is able to take advantage of every event, however small, in order to set forth before all his socialist convictions and his democratic demands, in order to clarify for all and everyone the world-historic significance of the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat." Can the tasks here underlined in this passage be fulfilled by an agitator without theoretical training -- can he "generalize all the manifestations," "take advantage of every event," set forth before all his socialist convictions, "clarify for all and everyone" the aims of the proletarian struggle? You cannot be this kind of agitator without study and training; Lenin emphasized this point scores of times. The work of such agitators by no means "lowers the level" of the Party; on the

contrary, it raises the level of the masses. This is a great deal more than can be said about the work of certain of our "propagandists" (bad propagandists) who look down their noses at agitation and declare all agitation to be "rightism." They don't know what they're talking about.

Agitation, like propaganda, can be done either via the medium of print or orally. Agitation via print, via a newspaper, in fact occupied a central role in the building of the Bolshevik Party and in its activity. Iskra, as Lenin points out several times, combined propaganda and agitation, but served mainly for agitation. (See e.g. "Draft Declaration of Editorial Board of Iskra and Zarya," CW Vol. 4, p. 326.) More on this later on. The publication of agitational material in print, in Iskra, however, was only the beginning of the agitational work. In localities all over Russia where Iskra supporters were active, they used the printed material as the basis for oral agitation, for agitational talks (as Lenin reports in his "Reflections on the Letter from 7 Ts. 6 F.," Vol. 6, p. 315), and in this way disseminated Marxist ideas far beyond the newspaper's readership, introducing them "in all circles of all workers who are accustomed to foregather in a particular town." (*ibid.*) In this way the printed agitation (in the newspaper) served not as an end in itself, but as political guide, fuel and stimulus for widespread agitation by means of the spoken word, utilizing for this purpose every kind of place and occasion where masses gather. The experience of the Albanian Party of Labor, some 40 years later, may be fairly taken as applicable to the work of the early Bolshevik Party as well:

"Of all forms of agitation and propaganda, agitation by word of mouth occupied the most important place -- discussions with people, separately or in small groups, discussions at gatherings of workers, of peasants, and of the youth. This form of agitation yielded most satisfactory results. The communists penetrated wherever the masses gathered. In order to come in contact with the people, they made use of all the means and methods that came to hand. They exploited extensively all old and new acquaintances, national and popular festivities, weddings, market-days, family ties, and so on." (*History of the PLA*, p. 104)

One has to be a hopeless pedant to raise the objection here that agitation with individuals or small groups contradicts Plekhanov's definition, since the agitator is supposed to present ideas "to a broad mass of people." Should the presentation of even one or a few ideas to even one or a few people be foregone, simply because it does not fit the typical case of agitation or of propaganda as Plekhanov outlined them? This would be the height of stupidity. Plekhanov's definition points to what the agitator should strive for -- an audience of the broad masses -- and what is typical and most characteristic in the work of a vigorous, well-developed party. This definition is not a scholastic formula for verbal juggling feats, but a guide to action; in this lies its real scientific value.

THE PROPAGANDIST'S WORK

We have already refuted the most common and most harmful of misconceptions concerning propaganda and agitation, namely the opportunist falsehood that only the "propagandist," but not the "agitator" has the task of presenting the ultimate aim of the struggle, i.e. of providing "revolutionary explanations." Both the propagandist and the agitator must do so. There are some other common misconceptions as well, on which we must spend a moment.

The propagandist, some comrades believe, addresses himself mainly to intellectuals and students; the task of addressing workers is, in the main, the agitator's. This is false. Propagandist and agitator alike must know how to work among all sorts of people; there is such a thing as agitational work among intellectuals, and, most importantly, the propagandist must know how to work directly in the working class. Is there a need to repeat this latter point, so elementary as it is? Perhaps not. Yet there are more than a few comrades who, when they hear the word "propaganda," as if by a conditioned reflex push the

workers away from it and push this propaganda away from the workers. Perhaps it is because there is so much bad propaganda, so much dogmatism and windbaggy masquerading as propaganda. But, as a general rule, keeping propaganda separated from the working class (---even in the rare situations where excellent, Leninist agitation is being conducted among the workers ---) shows too low an esteem not only of the workers' political but also of their intellectual capabilities. Workers, even 'ordinary' workers, un'educated' workers, will read even very "intellectual" texts and listen to very "intellectual" speeches -- far more "intellectual" than many of our "intellectuals" give the workers credit for -- provided that these texts and lectures really convey some substance, that they provide information and answers to the questions the workers are pondering. And these questions are far broader and range further afield from the concerns of everyday life than is sometimes imagined. If we do not have study circles organized among the workers, and regular lecture tours on a variety of subjects, attended by workers, the fault lies not with the workers but with our own hesitations, prejudices and backwardness. Moreover, if the agitators are doing their job in the Leninist way, if they are active in the work of political exposure, of mass political education, then the workers themselves will demand the organization and presentation of a more complete explanation, such as is the propagandist's job to provide.

PROPAGANDA ONLY AMONG ADVANCED?

Is it the case that the propagandist mainly addresses himself to the politically advanced workers, while the agitator's audience consists mainly of the politically average or backward workers? The practice of the Bolshevik Party does not bear out such a facile conclusion. For, in the first place, the workers whom Lenin characterized as "advanced" were themselves likely to participate in propaganda work not merely in the role of audience, but as propagandists in their own right. Such workers, as Lenin described them in the well-known passages from his article "Retrograde Trend," "devote themselves entirely to the education and organization of the proletariat," and form a "working-class intelligentsia." (CW Vol. 4, pp. 280-81.) The advanced workers are themselves theoreticians, propagandists, agitators and organizers, fully on a par with intellectuals coming to the Marxist-Leninist cause from origins in other classes. To think of the advanced workers therefore merely as the audience, as the "passive receptacle" of the propagandist's labors, and not also as active participants, as lecturers, speakers, writers, study group leaders, etc., is to make an unconscious concession to the elitist notion that workers -- no matter what their political level -- are not qualified to do propaganda work. In our present-day movement there are quite a few living refutations of this fallacy -- although a few of these worker-intellectuals, worker-propagandists, have themselves fallen under the influence of the petty-bourgeois intellectual notion that merely listening to propaganda, attending propaganda forums, reading propaganda articles and pamphlets, "being open to socialist ideas" or "responding to communism when it is presented" (etc. etc.) is the sum of the activities necessary to qualify as "advanced worker." This notion reeks of "liberal" paternalism.

THE ADVANCED GUIDE STUDY

Lenin referred to advanced workers as "those who guide the workers' study circles and all Social-Democratic activity" ("Retrograde Trend," Vol. 6, p. 284, emphasis added) -- and not merely as those who attended these circles and were guided by them. Those who merely attended and participated, but who did not show the capability of becoming "fully independent leaders" of the Social-Democratic movement (*ibid.*, p. 281) were, in Lenin's way of thinking, intermediate workers, not advanced workers. Lenin's approach to this question is free of that spirit of condescension and patronizing which anoints worker-followers of the Marxist-Leninist intelligentsia as "advanced" -- and thereby subtly forecloses the prospect of their genuine advancement to roles of ideological and practical leadership. In Lenin's way of thinking, the fact that the majority of workers are not yet followers of the Marxists is not proof that they are politically backward; it proves merely that

the Marxist leaders have not yet approached them, have not yet conducted systematic agitation and propaganda among them. Lenin was far from that philistine spirit which blames the workers for the backwardness of the Marxist theoreticians, propagandists, agitators and organizers.

WVO'S LUDICROUS MISREADING OF HISTORY

(Incidentally. While we are on this point, a word must be said in passing about a ludicrous misreading of Lenin's words in "Retrograde Trend" regarding the intermediate workers. This "broad stratum of average workers," Lenin says, "strive ardently for socialism, participate in workers' study circles, read socialist newspapers and books, participate in agitation" and are distinguished from the advanced only in that "they cannot become fully independent leaders of the Social-Democratic working-class movement." (ibid., p. 281). It requires a truly stupendous ignorance of history to interpret these words as if they were meant to say that the broad mass of the Russian workers at that time (1899!) were ardent socialists, i.e. that the majority of the Russian proletariat had already been won to socialism, was already enrolled in socialist study circles and was reading socialist newspapers and books -- only five years after the first contacts between socialist intellectuals and the working-class movement took place, two years before the first issue of *Iskra*, six years before the actual foundation of the Bolshevik Party!!! This fantastic, laughable misreading of Lenin and of history has been introduced with a straight face (all good comedians, it is said, deliver with a straight face) by those super-historians of our movement, the ideologists of WVO, in the course of an attempt at a polemic against PRRWO (see *WVO Journal* No. 4, p. 4). Truly, those early Russian Marxists must have been real miracle workers, to win the majority of the proletariat to socialism -- ardently, passionately, yet -- in only five years of effort, starting from zero, and without a Party, without regular Party institutions and regular Party literature! And under conditions of tsarist repression, with most of the socialist ideological leaders in jail or exile! At the very moment when Economism was at the peak of its influence, and when "even the enlightened workers," as Lenin recounts in *What Is To Be Done*, have lost sight of socialist aims, and when "political consciousness was completely overwhelmed by spontaneity"!! We congratulate WVO on this new and original reading of Russian history, which indeed "casts a whole new light on everything," as book reviewers say. . . . What is, in fact, Lenin's meaning in these passages from "Retrograde Trend"? It is that the average worker is capable of becoming a socialist, that it is possible to win the majority of the working class to socialism, BUT that only a minority of the working class, a comparatively few, "can become fully independent leaders" of the movement, i.e. its vanguard, its advanced detachment. Lenin is not asserting, as WVO thinks, that the vanguard has already won the majority of the class to socialism -- even before this vanguard itself (in 1899!) had been set on its feet; quite the contrary. Lenin is polemicizing against an Economist ideologue who (a) denies that the proletariat can produce its own vanguard and believes that it must always be dependent on the intellectual leaders from other classes; and (b) denies that the mass of the workers can ever be won to socialism, believing that reformism, Economism, is the highest form of political consciousness of which the average worker is capable. Any other reading of these passages of Lenin's makes a ludicrous mish-mash of Leninist theory and of actual history.)

MASS OF READERS IS AVERAGE

To return to our subject: does the propagandist take for his audience mainly the advanced workers, i.e. those who are themselves leaders as theoreticians, propagandists, agitators, and organizers? This is tantamount to asking: Do the advanced workers take for their audience chiefly each other and the Marxist-Leninist intellectuals?

Without a doubt all the advanced elements must maintain communication among themselves. This is essential for the conduct of ideological struggles, for achieving political and organizational unity, and for much else. A vanguard whose separate elements remain out of touch with each

other, and do not constantly strive to improve and to intensify mutual contact, could not function as a vanguard. This is so obvious that it should go without saying.

At the same time, however, as we have seen, those who attended the study circles led by the advanced, at the time Lenin is writing, were, in the main, intermediate workers. Average workers, too, as Lenin tells us also in "Retrograde Trend," made up the mass of the readership of the Marxist press. (p. 281.) Lenin's *Iskra*, when it was founded two years later, was not an exception, as Lenin records in a 1903 polemic against the Bolshevik whose code name was "7 Ts. 6 F.":

"You will of course say that it is impossible, impossible in general, to get, for instance, *Iskra*, our main product, linked up with the masses. I know you will say that. I have heard it hundreds of times and have always replied that this is untrue, that it is a subterfuge, shirking, inability, and indolence, the desire to have roast duck fly straight into your mouths.

"I know from the facts that enterprising people have been able to 'link up' *Iskra* (this super-intellectual *Iskra*, as the sorry little intellectuals consider it) with the masses of even such backward and uneducated workers as those in the industrial gubernias around Moscow. I have known workers who have themselves distributed *Iskra* among the masses (there) and who merely remarked that there were too few copies." (Vol. 6, pp. 314-15.)

AGAINST LOWERING THE LEVEL

And yet, at the same time as he insisted that *Iskra* -- 'that super-intellectual *Iskra*' -- could and should be distributed among the masses, Lenin also polemicized against the concept of the so-called "mass literature" and "popular" newspapers. How is this to be explained? Because such literature bases itself on the premise that the only way to reach and to interest the average worker is to lower its political level to that of its audience. Lenin, by contrast, insisted, and correctly, that a paper, in order to be of value to the average worker, must be written from the political standpoint and level of the advanced workers, so that the average worker, in reading it, is raised up to a higher level. Necessarily, there will be some material in such a paper that the average worker will not fully understand. Is this a bad thing? Not necessarily. For in the first place, a newspaper that had to stop and chew over every point would lose its interest for the advanced workers; and further, there is no such thing as receiving an education without being confronted with things one does not at first understand, or understand fully. A newspaper that merely reflects and repeats what the average worker already knows cannot possibly educate, it cannot possibly raise the average worker's level of understanding. As Lenin put it, the newspaper must not "lower itself to the level of the mass of its readers. The newspaper, on the contrary, must raise their level and help promote advanced workers from the middle stratum of workers." ("Retrograde Trend" p. 281, emphasis added.) What goes for the newspaper goes for propaganda and agitation generally: the political level is that of the advanced, the bulk of the audience is composed of the intermediate or average, in order to raise up the level of the average, in order to make advanced workers out of average ones.

WHERE DO THE ADVANCED COME FROM?

Where do advanced workers come from, anyway? Many of the comrades in our movement talk every day about "winning over the advanced" and "uniting with the advanced" and so forth and so on, without ever asking, what is the source of supply? Does the everyday heaving, pressing and grinding of the working-class struggle produce of its own accord these leaders "who can win the confidence of the laboring masses, who devote themselves entirely to the education and organization of the proletariat, who accept socialism consciously, and who even elaborate independent socialist theories" -- like nature of its own accord produces diamonds? (The passage quoted is from "Retrograde Trend," p. 280.) Yes -- to a certain extent, this is the case; but it is the exceptional case, it is rare. In the main and as a general rule, social-

ist ideological, theoretical and practical leaders are not created by the spontaneous process. They are created by "outside intervention," i.e. by the conscious, systematic merger of Marxist intellectuals originating in other classes with the spontaneous working-class movement.

"The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade-union consciousness, i.e., the conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight the employers, and strive to compel the government to pass necessary labor legislation, etc. The theory of socialism, however, grew out of the philosophic, historical, and economic theories elaborated by educated representatives of the propertied classes, by intellectuals. By their social status, the founders of modern scientific socialism, Marx and Engels, themselves belonged to the bourgeois intelligentsia. In the very same way, in Russia, the theoretical doctrine of Social-Democracy arose altogether independently of the spontaneous growth of the working-class movement; it arose as a natural and inevitable outcome of the development of thought among the revolutionary socialist intelligentsia..." (What Is To Be Done, Vol. 5, pp. 375-376.)

COUNTING ON SPONTANEITY

To speak of "conducting propaganda only or mainly among the advanced" means to give no thought to where the advanced come from, how they are created. Our "leftist" trend, which wants to conduct its work in this way, thereby quite conveniently assumes that someone or something else will supply the advanced workers, or create them, and ensure a steady flow of them into the study circles. This is another form of relying on spontaneity, as LMLU's eclectic essay states, in this case correctly.

On the other side, many comrades have found from direct and indirect experience that it is rather rare to find advanced workers of the sort Lenin describes, i.e. workers who have developed to this caliber by their independent efforts, without the intervention of a M-L organization. Feeling disappointed in their expectations, they then bend or revise Lenin's conception of the advanced worker, essentially lowering and diluting it. "Historical conditions" and quack philosophical notions of relativism are brought in to prettify this reduction. (See Postscript to this article.) These comrades, too, are victims of the fallacy of the large-scale spontaneous generation of the advanced.

By lowering the level of who the advanced are, these comrades also lower the whole scale of political values and qualities -- from the newspaper to recruitment to program, tactics and ideology -- to the level of the average or intermediate. This is precisely what Lenin so sharply warned against.

Both the "Left" and the Right lines on this question go by the assumption that the advanced grow on trees, or that the stork brings them, when no one is looking. In reality, and as a general rule, it is the work of conducting systematic agitation and propaganda among "ordinary," average, intermediate workers which, while raising the level of the whole mass to a certain degree, brings forth, educates, raises up and promotes a certain relatively small number of "average" workers to the level and ranks of the advanced, to become "fully independent leaders." It is conscious M-L propaganda and agitation among "ordinary" workers that creates the advanced and reinforces their ranks.

INTELLECTUALS INITIATE

Historically it is the intellectuals from other classes who initiate this work; but their role is always, as Lenin said, "to make special leaders from among the intelligentsia unnecessary." (Vol. 1, p. 298.) In other words, as the ranks of the advanced workers gradually expand, as worker-theoreticians, worker-propagandists, worker-agitators and organizers mature, it is these latter who shoulder more and more the work of conducting propaganda and agitation among the average workers, thus reproducing and rein-

forcing the ranks of the proletarian vanguard.

Diamonds -- advanced workers -- are chiefly to be "made," not chiefly to be "found." This, in a nutshell, is the general difference of principle on this question between the position of Leninism and the positions which, in various forms, rely chiefly on the workings of the spontaneous process for the creation of a Communist leadership of the working class. We shall have some more to say a little later about the particular historical features of our time which bear on this question.

III. PROPAGANDA OR AGITATION -- WHERE SHOULD THE EMPHASIS LIE?

We spoke in the first chapter about the aspect of unity between propaganda and agitation, and in the second chapter about the aspects of difference between them. We now turn to the question of emphasis, namely: which of the two, propaganda or agitation, must be the chief form of the party's activity in the first main period of its development?

Because, as experience has shown, when people debate this question they often use the same words but have totally different ideas in mind, it is worthwhile spending a few moments "defining the terms."

(a) "Main period of development." This term is taken from a couple of essays of Stalin's in which he divides the history of the Bolshevik Party into three major periods: (1) the period of the formation of the vanguard, the creation of the party, the period of preparation; (2) the period of revolutionary mass struggle under the party's leadership, of winning the broad masses of workers and peasants to the side of the vanguard, of revolutionary action; (3) the period after taking power. (Stalin, Works, Vol. 5, pp. 87-88, 103-105.) Stalin dates the first period as 1900-1905; the second 1905-1917. If we go back to the first recorded beginnings of the Russian party, its embryonic stage of formation, the "first main period" stretches over 10 years, from 1895 to 1905. But the precise dates do not matter for the present particular question. What needs chiefly to be stressed, for the benefit of certain comrades who have not understood it yet, is that within these "main periods" there were, in practice, considerable variations, ups and downs, de facto sub-periods (such as those which Lenin and Stalin outline in other writings), which make it impossible to attach to the question of the main periods any significance other than that of the main, general line and orientation. The question, then, is not one of "tactics" in party-building, of whether to give relatively more weight to propaganda or to agitation for the moment, for the next few months, for the next short period (in order to correct an existing deviation). The question is about the "strategic plan" in party-building, about which form of activity must predominate in the main period taken as a whole, i.e. over a period of many months, perhaps over five years, perhaps ten years -- no one can predict. Of course, to those who are capable of changing their general line on party-building every three months or so, the idea of such a thing as a "five-year plan" for party-building will seem hopelessly abstract and incomprehensible. Such people see in every plan and every issue only the interests of the immediate moment (and even those not very clearly), and are ready at the drop of a hat to sacrifice long-term principles for short-term advantage.

CONCENTRATION OF FORCES

(b) "Chief form of activity." The ordinary pedestrian mind, confronted with the question of what the term "chief form of activity" means, will reply something to the effect that it is the activity in which most people engage most of their active time, the activity on which the most time, forces, and other resources are concentrated. What is the chief form of activity in an auto plant? Production. In an office? Paperwork. In a hospital? Maintaining patients. In the October League? Having meetings. This is how ordinary

mortals will answer. Recently, however, a strain of poets has appeared among us for whom this humdrum logic is too pale, too gray. "Chief" form of activity, for them, means not the most common activity, the activity on which most forces are concentrated, but rather the loftiest, most noble among all activities, or also the most "essential" of activities, or the most "supreme" of activities, the "heart" or "backbone" and various and sundry other organs. From their Olympian perspective, the prosaic logic that associates "chief form of activity" with the concentration of forces and energies appears as merely "quantitative thinking," and the proviso that quantity turns into quality is beneath their notice. On which form of activity, propaganda or agitation, should the resources of a Marxist-Leninist organization be concentrated? What form of activity should most of its cadre be engaged in most of their active time, if we look at the life of the organization over a period of several years? Goodness! Don't bother us with such "quantitative" questions! How can you raise such a "mechanical" question! (Above all, how dare you raise such a practical, concrete question, which we don't know how to answer!) -- That is how these "poets" respond. All their singsong and imagery on this question mean only this: they don't much care what most of the cadre do with most of their time, so long as they pay their dues.

A CREAM-PUFF DEBATE

Another thing: "Chief" form of activity does not mean "only" form of activity. Our target is not the line of "propaganda as only form of activity" put forward for a brief period by PRRWO (and now disavowed). That line is so discredited that there is no need to waste words on it. The debate against it was a cream-puff debate. Any literate six-year-old could have won it; simply opening up almost any page of almost any of Lenin's first six volumes would have supplied a quote that states plainly that agitation and propaganda must be combined. What is there to boast about in having scored a victory over the propaganda-only line? WVO, which brags that it spearheaded this victory, should rather feel ashamed for having got into bed with people who hold such positions. "He can't walk and chew gum at the same time" is a way of saying someone is not very bright. A party which can't conduct agitation and propaganda at the same time, a party of the PRRWO type, would be a not very "bright" party.

(c) "Propaganda" and "agitation." The reader who has not read the first two parts of this article, should go back and do so before reading on. By "agitation" we do not mean 'calling on the masses to take action around some particular injustice or problem' (i.e. demanding reforms), a la Martynov-Klonsky. We mean the political education of the masses, in connection with every particular problem and injustice, in the basic ideas of Marxism-Leninism, and, in particular, in the quintessential idea of Marxism-Leninism, the dictatorship of the proletariat. Further, by "propaganda," we do not mean the presentation of Marxist ideas in general (the broad or 'popular' meaning of 'propaganda'); we mean propaganda in the strict sense, as defined by Plekhanov: "the presentation of many ideas to one or a few persons." The reader who thinks that "propaganda" means the presentation of the ultimate aim and "agitation" means fighting for immediate aims should STOP HERE, go back, and read the first two chapters.

"PREVAILING POSITION"

With these wearisome but necessary preliminaries out of the way, we come to the subject proper: on which form of activity, propaganda or agitation (as defined) should the party concentrate its main forces in the first main period of its development? Our target is the line which holds that the answer to this question is not "agitation" but "propaganda." According to WVO (Journal No. 4, p. 7), which is itself the chief theoretical proponent of this line, the line of "propaganda as chief form of activity" "has become the prevailing position on this question in the anti-revisionist movement."

Is this statement an accurate description of the facts? It is substantially accurate. The clearest proof that this is indeed the

"prevailing position" is the fact that the Klonsky circle in the summer of 1976 swung the October League into line behind the "propaganda as chief form of activity" banner. That swing consolidated a definite shift in the balance of forces within our movement on this particular question. The old prevailing slogan of trade unionism -- of "agitation" in the Economist sense -- as chief form of activity, put forth by the RCP more or less consistently, and criticized and exposed (more or less consistently) by every other group since 1972 or earlier, gave way to the new prevailing slogan, on this question, that the chief form of activity must be propaganda. To what extent the rise to dominance of this new line represents genuine progress over the opportunism and backwardness of the old dominant line, and to what extent it represents a continuation of the same opportunism and backwardness in a new form -- this is the question.

SLIM THREAD OF AUTHORITY

And so to the subject.

Rarely has any line current in our movement -- unless it be the "propaganda only" line -- rested on so slender a thread of authority from the classic texts of Marxism-Leninism as the line of "propaganda as chief form of activity in the first main period." The concept behind it, and the phrase itself, hangs essentially from a single sentence fragment in a work of Stalin's, and this work of Stalin's is in the nature of rough notes, ideas jotted down in outline form, a synopsis rather than a completed essay. The texts which are usually cited in the nature of circumstantial support for the "propaganda as chief form" idea are extremely few in number and light in relevance. Moreover, when we go more deeply into the matter, we discover not only that the few snatches of authority claimed for this line must be literally snatched out of their textual and historical context to make them fit the case, but also that there is a whole mountain of textual and historical evidence which refutes the claims of our "propaganda as chief form of activity" school. We shall see that the line which pressed the youthful Russian Marxist organizations to throw their main forces into propaganda rather than agitation was a line of backwardness and of opposition to building a party of the Leninist type; and we shall see that the same is true of the same line transposed into the concrete conditions of our time.

Here is that "famous" sentence fragment of Stalin's, from his synopsis for the article "The Political Strategy and Tactics of the Russian Communists." (Works, Vol. 5, pp. 63-89.) Under point 10 of this rough sketch, Stalin writes:

"Tasks:

"a) To win the vanguard of the proletariat to the side of communism (i.e., build up cadres, create a Communist Party, work out the programme, the principles of tactics). Propaganda as the chief form of activity.

"b) To win the broad masses of the workers and of the toilers generally to the side of the vanguard (to bring the masses up to the fighting positions). Chief form of activity -- practical action by the masses as a prelude to decisive battles." (p. 82-3)

Aha! There it is! cry the ideologues of our present-day "propaganda-as-chief-form-of-activity" trend, and they have cited this sentence fragment hundreds of times, like an incantation, a shibboleth that defines membership in a trend. It should be noted, however, that 99 and 44/100ths per cent of the time, all that is cited is just this sentence fragment. Some of our "propagandists" are strong believers in the concept of "sorting out;" and so, when they quote this passage, they make it a principle to "sort out" the rest of the two paragraphs in which it appears, to "sort out" the whole rest of the work, and to "sort out" the real history of the Bolshevik Party.

What gets "sorted out" (liquidated) in the process is the plainly intended meaning of the sentence fragment. In fact, nothing at all is said in this passage about the question of emphasis between propaganda and agitation. The word "propaganda" is not used in the strict sense, in contradistinction to agitation, but in the broad,

more ordinary sense of 'spreading ideas,' to distinguish the period of mainly spreading ideas from the period where "practical action by the masses" became the chief form of activity. Used in this broad, general sense, which is entirely legitimate in this specific context, the term "propaganda" includes both agitation and propaganda in the strict sense; it encompasses any form of spreading ideas by verbal persuasion. No deductions whatever can be drawn from this passage about the wholly different question of the emphasis as between agitation and propaganda in the narrower sense. To give the word its stricter sense when what is intended is the looser sense is simply to project into Stalin's words a meaning that is not there; it is to play with words, and bend them to one's preconceptions, instead of trying to grasp Marxism.*

LENIN'S PAMPHLET

This sentence fragment from Stalin's synopsis -- to which we will return in a moment -- is based, as Stalin indicates in the text, on Lenin's pamphlet "Left-Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder," written in 1920. The particular passage to which Stalin had reference is the following:

"As long as it was (and inasmuch as it still is) a question of winning the proletariat's vanguard over to the side of communism, priority went and still goes to propaganda work; even propaganda circles, with all their parochial limitations, are useful under these conditions, and produce good results. But when it is a question of practical action by the masses, of the disposition, if one may so put it, of vast armies, of the alignment of all the class forces in a given society for the final and decisive battle, then propagandist methods alone, the mere repetition of the truths of 'pure' communism, are of no avail."
(CW Vol. 31, pp. 93-94.)

This passage shows that Stalin quite accurately summed up its sense, i.e. the dis-

*Here are a couple of other examples of the use of "propaganda" in the broad sense:

In "What the 'Friends of the People' Are," Lenin quotes the German S-D leader Liebknecht's words: "Studieren, Propagandieren, Organisieren" -- "study, propaganda, organization." The immediate context, where Lenin speaks of spreading the results of theoretical work "among the whole Russian working class," makes it clear that "propaganda" here means simply spreading ideas, verbal persuasion, including agitation. The broad usage is legitimate in this context, where Lenin is contrasting the practical work of spreading ideas (propaganda and agitation) with the task of elaborating ideas, i.e. theoretical work. (CW Vol. 1, p. 298.)

Again in his polemic against the liberal Struve, in "Two Tactics," Lenin draws the contrast between spreading ideas and leading revolutionary mass action. Again he uses "propaganda" in the broad sense, this time inserting the word in quotes: The revolutionary Marxists already several years before 1905, Lenin reminds Struve, "openly issued the slogan even of a popular insurrection, not in the meaning of a direct appeal (Mr. Struve would not discover any appeal to 'riot' in our utterances of that period), but in the meaning of 'propaganda' (of which Mr. Struve has only now bethought himself -- our worthy Mr. Struve is always several years behind the times), in the sense of preparing those very 'socio-psychological conditions' on which the representatives of the bewildered and huckstering bourgeoisie are now 'sadly and inappropriately' holding forth." In the very next sentence Lenin clarifies: "At that time, propaganda and agitation, agitation and propaganda were really brought to the forefront... At that time slogans advocating mass agitation instead of direct armed action, preparation of the socio-psychological conditions for insurrection instead of pyrotechnics were revolutionary Social-Democracy's only correct slogans." (Vol. 9, p. 71) Plainly, precisely as in the case of Stalin's synopsis, the word "propaganda" in the sentence referring to Struve is used in the broad sense, encompassing also mass agitation.

inction between the spreading of ideas and the direct leadership of the masses in revolutionary action. Here, too, in speaking of "propaganda work," Lenin is using the broad sense of the term, as is shown by the phrase immediately following: "even propaganda circles, with all their parochial limitations, are useful under these conditions and produce good results." In other words, in the first period, priority goes to the spreading of ideas; even propaganda in the strict sense (why else this "even"?) is useful, and gives good results. Far from being an endorsement of our "propagandists'" pet thesis on the alleged primacy of propaganda in the strict sense, Lenin's passage constitutes a caution that this form of activity, though necessary, useful and capable of producing good results, is beset with "parochial limitations." Our "propagandists," when they try to claim this passage as support for their line, are quite unconsciously making the following pronouncement: The party, during its first period, ought to concentrate as much as possible on a limited, parochial form of activity; the party's activity ought chiefly to be parochial and limited in form. Such, indeed, as we will see when we pursue the matter further, is the real content of the present-day "propagandist" trend.

A SECOND FORMULATION

But let us return to Stalin's rough outline on "Strategy and Tactics," where the "famous" sentence fragment that has become the banner of our "propaganda" trend occurs. In that same essay-outline, a few pages later, Stalin again returns to the question of the main periods. His formulations this time are quite similar to the first approach. But there is one significant difference:

"a) the period of the formation of the vanguard (i.e., the party) of the proletariat, the period of mustering the Party's cadres (in this period the Party was weak; it had a programme and general principles of tactics, but as a party of mass action it was weak);

"b) the period of revolutionary mass struggle under the leadership of the Communist Party. In this period the Party was transformed from an organisation for mass agitation into an organisation for mass action; the period of preparation was superseded by the period of revolutionary action." (pp. 87-88)

Again Stalin draws the same basic distinction between the period of preparation and the period of revolutionary mass action. Only this time, in describing the party's activities in the first main period, he calls the party "an organization for mass agitation."

How extremely rare it is to find this passage quoted by our present-day "propaganda-as-chief-form-of-activity" school! And no wonder, since the words "an organization for mass agitation" wipe out with one blow the house of cards which our "propagandists" have erected on Stalin's sentence fragment in the same work.

THREE EVASIONS

What to do? How to salvage the "propaganda" (in the strict sense) concept in the face of Stalin's statement that the Party in the first main period was "an organization for mass agitation"? How to evade, to wriggle around, to obliterate at all costs the plain and rational conclusion, so damning to our "propaganda" trend, that Stalin means "propaganda" here simply in the broad sense of spreading ideas? We find in our movement three distinct but related attempts to bluff one's way out of this dilemma.

The first, of course, is simply to ignore Stalin's flat statement that the Party in the first main period was "an organization for mass agitation." This is the option of WVO, which evidently considers "discretion" the better part of "theoretical valor" on this score.

THE ECLECTIC BLUFF

The second option is the "eclectic" bluff. It consists of quoting both passages in juxtaposition and pretending that the result makes sense, somewhat

like a juggler who, upon breaking a couple of raw eggs all over his face, pretends that it is all part of the act. This is the approach of the League for Marxist-Leninist Unity (LMLU), which -- as was pointed out in M-L FORWARD No. 1 -- exercised such a spellbinding effect on the Klonsky circle. To the LMLU's credit it must be said that at least they do not try to hide Stalin's statement that the Party was "an organization for mass agitation," but the result of not hiding it is in the end even more damaging.

"Basing ourselves upon the experience of the Bolshevik party," asserts the LMLU (falsely), "we believe that the following slogan expresses the correct relationship between propaganda and agitation in the first period of the party's development: Propaganda is the chief form of activity; the party is an organization of mass agitation. This slogan is a restatement of Stalin's description that we quoted earlier." (Class Struggle No. 4-5, p. 78)

Eureka! How perfectly simple! Why didn't anybody think of it before! If we want to resolve any contradiction, we have only to string the words together in the appropriate way and declare our formula to "express the correct relationship." For example: "Kenya is a tropical country" and "The prevailing weather in Kenya is blizzards" -- how to resolve this contradiction? Simple: "We believe that the following slogan expresses the correct relationship between tropic heat and arctic storms in Kenya: Kenya is a tropical country; blizzards are the prevailing form of weather." This is what the profundity of the LMLU amounts to -- the eclectic patching together of two opposite lines, only one of which can be dominant. The result is sheer theoretical gibberish. Which one is primary -- propaganda or agitation? The LMLU's formulation begs the question. A party, of course, must carry on agitation and propaganda simultaneously, or it is not a party. But, if we are genuinely intent on answering the problem of emphasis as between these two inseparable forms of activity, and not merely talking our way around this problem, we must be able to say, in the last analysis, either A or B: either the party was an organization for agitation, or it was an organization for propaganda; either agitation or propaganda was its dominant form of activity. The LMLU's purely verbal, and hence purely useless "resolution" of this question indeed shows, as Red Banner (ATM organ) commented, that LMLU "desires to have its cake and eat it too -- they want both agitation and propaganda to be our chief form of activity. No comrades, this is not possible." (No. 1, p. 4.) (However, it must be pointed out that the ATM comrades themselves, in trying to construct a concept of "mass propaganda" (ibid.) as a central form of activity, are yielding to the same sort of temptation as LMLU, namely "resolution" of real questions by the manipulation of words.)

In reality, LMLU is forced into these undignified contortions solely because it misapprehends Stalin's sentence fragment on "propaganda" in the unwarranted narrow sense. Read this sentence fragment correctly, as it was intended, and there is no contradiction to resolve between this fragment and the statement that the party was an "organization for mass agitation." But, of course, if the sentence fragment is read correctly, then there is also no justification for the theorizing of our "propaganda-as-chief-form" tendency.

MUDDLE THE DISTINCTION

The third kind of maneuver for wiggling out of our "propagandists'" self-made dilemma is the most subtle one, and is beginning to enjoy the greatest popularity. It consists of muddling up the distinction between propaganda and agitation altogether, of sidestepping the question by obscuring it. The broad, general usage of "propaganda" is surreptitiously substituted for the narrow, precise one; propaganda in the strict sense and agitation in the strict (Leninist) sense are blurred together under the common heading of "propaganda" in a context where this is inappropriate and can only lead to confusion.

This is the road taken by, among others, the Workers' Congress WC/M-L) in its organ The Communist, in the course of several polemics against "Left" and Right opportunism.

For example, in a critique of the "Wing," WC attacks what it calls the "too narrow" concept of propaganda which the "Wing" practices. "We must take propaganda to the working class in every way possible," WC argues, and then identifies as "a major aspect of our propaganda" the work of "topical political exposures." (The Communist, Aug. 28 1976, p. 3.) (The same ideas, in a sketchier form, are put forth in The Communist of July 20, p. 1.) Again, in a longer and in many ways praiseworthy article "On Political Exposures," the paper argues that a test of how well the line of "propaganda as chief form of activity" is being applied in practice "is the degree to which that line is reflected in the character of political exposures." (p. 13, issue of July 20.) Fine! We are all for political exposures. But surely WC must be aware -- and the comrades are aware -- that "topical political exposures" is precisely and chiefly what Lenin had in mind when he outlined the tasks of agitation and of an agitational newspaper? This fact, which WC is led to touch on in the course of a critique of certain aspects of the LMLU line (a weak critique), results in the following:

"The comrades (of LMLU) insist that a newspaper in this period should be primarily agitational. We don't disagree with that line, which is put forward by Lenin

"But it is important that our position on agitation be subordinate to propaganda work which has priority."

(The Communist, Aug. 28, p. 8.)

ONE OR THE OTHER

In other words, Lenin says a newspaper should combine agitation and propaganda, with the emphasis on agitation; but WC says that a newspaper should combine agitation and propaganda, with the emphasis on propaganda.

A fine pickle! Only, why does WC claim that it "does not disagree" with Lenin's line on this question? Clearly, it does disagree. The two formulations, Lenin's and WC's, clash with each other just as much as the two parts of LMLU's own magic formula about tropical blizzards. Naturally, WC has a perfect right to disagree with Lenin on any point it chooses, giving its reasons; and furthermore, the main point which the comrades are trying to make, about the urgency of political exposures, is entirely correct. What is impermissible is the pretense that there is no disagreement; and what is incorrect, in this context, is to stretch the concept of propaganda so that it also covers political agitation, so that the distinction between propaganda and agitation is wiped out.

In the context of making a distinction between propaganda-and-agitation (the spreading of ideas) on the one hand, and theoretical work; or between propaganda-and-agitation on the one hand, and the leadership of revolutionary mass action, on the other hand, the use of the term "propaganda" in the broad, general sense (to stand for propaganda-and-agitation, since it is tiresome always to repeat the two words) is entirely legitimate and useful; only literary nitpickers and body-snatchers will be confused by it, or create confusion with it. But in the wholly distinct context of trying to clarify what propaganda, in specific, and what agitation, in specific, consist of and how and in what proportion they must be combined, the usage of "propaganda" in the loose sense is illegitimate and only opens up a Pandora's box of wriggling, crawling confusion.

BACK IN THE LAP OF MARTYNOV

Where, in fact, do we land when we use the loose sense of "propaganda" in a context where only the strict sense is appropriate? We land right back in the lap of the arch-Economist Martynov, for whom (let us recall):

"...the revolutionary explanation of the present social system, entire or in its partial manifestations, whether that be done in a form intelligible to individuals or to broad masses"

is "propaganda." The muddling together of the elements which Plekhanov's definition of propaganda and agitation puts into

a clear perspective; the stretching of "propaganda" to include and encompass revolutionary agitation, topical political exposures; the wiping out of the question whether the ideas presented are "in a form intelligible to individuals or to broad masses"-- this is the characteristic brand mark of the Economist presentation of the question of "agitation" and "propaganda."

It was therefore entirely logical from the Economist standpoint to characterize Lenin's Iskra as a newspaper consisting chiefly of "propaganda." This is precisely what Martynov himself expressed, saying: "With Iskra, propagandist tasks force agitational tasks into the background, at least for the present." (What Is To Be Done, CW Vol. 5, p. 411.) And, since Iskra, as is well known, was the leader, the guideline and the scaffolding of a whole trend engaged in the organization of the Party, there is no doubt that if someone had asked Martynov the Economist what the "chief form of activity" of that trend, that Party, consisted of, Martynov the Economist would have answered "propaganda." (Lenin, the Marxist, would have answered and did answer -- as we shall see -- "political agitation.") The lesson is that if you base yourself on the Economist presentation of the question of "agitation" and "propaganda" you will inevitably be led into the fallacy that Leninist newspaper work and Leninist party-building mean making "propaganda" the chief form of activity of the organization; and conversely, if you believe that "propaganda" is the chief form of activity in this work it proves that you are still, despite your "rejection" of Economism, looking at the world through Economist eyes.

THROUGH ECONOMIST EYES

Despite Lenin's sharp and crushing refutation of this Economist characterization of Iskra, which practically every comrade in our movement has undoubtedly had lying under his eyes at least once or twice, we still find comrades virtually parroting Martynov's point of view. So, for example, besides WC's leanings on this point, we read in the Nov. 1976 issue of Seize the Time (Mountain View, Calif.) about the "need for an Iskra type journal.... a nation-wide propaganda organ," (p. 28); and in the position paper "On Party Building" by the Tucson Marxist-Leninist Collective, we learn that "the primary aspect of the Iskra-type newspaper would be propaganda" (p. 4). It would be possible but tedious to multiply such quotations; the entire present-day "propaganda-as-chief-form" tendency, explicitly or implicitly, sees the tasks of an Iskra type newspaper -- and hence, inevitably to one degree or another, of a Leninist type party in general -- through the eyes of Martynov, the Economist. Lamentable, but true: our "propagandists" do not know what propaganda is. Or agitation.

"PROPAGANDISTS" ECONOMIST PREMISE

Our "propaganda" trend has rightly and justifiably criticized the principal conclusion that arises from the Economist mode of reasoning, namely that the struggle for reforms must be the party's highest goal and its chief preoccupation in the first main period. But our theoreticians have not yet fully criticized the basic premise from which this principal conclusion follows. This premise, the pivot on which Economist reasoning turns, is the denial that it is possible, on any practically significant scale, to organize the presentation of revolutionary ideas to the masses, i.e. to conduct Leninist political agitation. The presentation of reformist, liberal ideas to the masses is what Economist recognizes as "agitation." Economism also acknowledges as a practical possibility the presentation of 'revolutionary explanations' (at least, what Economism considers 'revolutionary') to small groups of intellectuals. But the presentation of revolutionary explanations to the masses of the workers, i.e. Leninist political agitation, is in Economist eyes so insignificant a practical possibility that it should be lumped in together with the organization of study circles, with propaganda in the strict sense, under a "broadened" heading of "propaganda." This is how Martynov "rendered Plekhanov 'more profound.'"

Our present-day "propaganda" trend has not yet freed itself fully from this basic

premise of Economist reasoning: denial of the practical possibility of organizing the presentation of revolutionary explanations to the masses, denial that a party can and must be centered on this form of activity. Despite some considerable (though uneven) progress at various points within our "propaganda" trend, its theoretical feet are still caught in the "more profound" Economist web. That is why, the more it struggles to strike blows against Economism with the banner of "propaganda," the more firmly entangled and enmeshed it becomes.

IV. THE EXPERIENCE OF THE BOLSHEVIK PARTY

If propaganda, in the strict sense which our "propagandists" want to project into Stalin's sentence fragment, had really been the chief form of activity of the Russian party up to 1905, then it ought to be a fairly easy matter to find statements to that effect in the works of Lenin written during the 1895-1905 period.

Lenin, after all, went about the struggle to build the Party in a highly conscious manner, to say the least. He exposed every deviation from the plan he proposed, laid out his own views as clearly and explicitly and repeatedly as anyone could ask for, and answered every argument that came to his ears against his plan. Surely, somewhere in the nine volumes Lenin wrote before the beginning of the second main period, there must be at least a phrase or two to the effect that propaganda, as distinct from agitation, ought to be the Party's main form of activity.

Yet, despite all our "propagandists'" sifting and resifting of Lenin's Collected Works spanning that period, they have so far succeeded in bringing to light not one single statement to this effect. Statements calling for a higher level of propaganda and of agitation, yes. Warnings against the divorce of agitation from propaganda, of course. Polemics against the exaggeration of economic agitation also abound -- but these texts advocate not a turn toward propaganda but rather a turn toward political agitation.

In the summer of 1976, a member of the October League (now ex-member) offered, in writing, a prize of cash or some other suitable item to anyone who could produce a statement from Lenin, written during the 1895-1905 period, that clearly corroborates the present-day "propaganda" trend's interpretation of history. This challenge met with no takers. A prize of sorts, however, should go to the member of the Klonsky circle who offered the following argument: Lenin realized only 20 years later what the chief form of activity of the party had been in the first decade! In other words, Lenin had been sleepwalking during 1895-1905, and didn't really know what he was doing. A pity that the Klonsky circle, celebrated for its wide-awake, never-miss-a-step approach to party-building, wasn't present at the time to enlighten Lenin. . .

DISCOMFORT FOR "PROPAGANDISTS"

The problem for our "propagandists" is not that Lenin never, or hardly ever, touched on the question of emphasis between agitation and propaganda. On the contrary; he wrote about it fairly considerably. There lies the real problem -- for what Lenin had to say on this score not only gives no comfort to our "propaganda" trend, it gives them discomfort.

Let us see.

In early 1905, at the beginning of the second main period, as we have said, and in preparation for the upcoming Third Congress of the RSDLP, Lenin cast his eyes backward over the development of the party during the previous decade and made the following summary:

"The development of a mass working-class movement in Russia in connection with the development of Social-Democracy is marked by three notable transitions. The first was the transition from narrow propagandist circles to wide economic agitation among the masses; the second was the transition to political agitation on a large scale and to open street demonstrations; the third was the transition to actual civil war, . .

to direct revolutionary struggle, to the armed popular uprising."

("New Tasks and New Forces," Vol. 8, p. 211.)

This is of course only a broad overview, leaving many details to be filled in. The essential point, however, as regards the question of emphasis as between agitation and propaganda, is clearly indicated: the period when the party was chiefly characterized by "narrow propagandist circles" -- here again we see Lenin's warning against the limited, parochial nature of this form of activity -- this period belonged to the very infancy of the party; it would be more accurate to say, to its embryonic stage. It came to an end, as we shall see, in the mid-1890s. As for the transition to "economic agitation," as we will also see, this was a deviation, a diversion. The revolutionary trend attempted to go over to political agitation directly upon passing out of the "propaganda circle" phase of its development, and did actually do so to a considerable extent; but its further progress was arrested by the rise, in 1897-98, of the Economist deviation. That Economist trend, in turn, was in the main defeated around 1901-02 (as Lenin recounts in "Preface to 2nd Ed. of 'Tasks'", Vol. 6, p. 212), with the foundation of the Iskra organization. Thus, the beginning of the "second transition" which Lenin refers to in the passage quoted above, i.e. the "transition to political agitation on a large scale and to open street demonstrations," coincides exactly with the opening of what Stalin refers to as the first main period in the party's history.

EMBRYO OF PARTY: TURN TO AGITATION

It is self-evident that Lenin's overview, which we have just quoted, does not jibe with the thesis of our "propagandists." It does corroborate very clearly, however, Stalin's statement that the party during this period was "an organization for mass agitation," namely political agitation. Now let us take a closer look back at the earliest phase of the party's development.

The beginnings of the party in Russia, in the most rudimentary sense, are generally traced back to the organization, by Lenin, of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class. These first real beginnings of a revolutionary party in Russia, embodied in the St. Petersburg League, coincided with the transition from propaganda to mass agitation. As is recorded in the History of the CPSU, Short Course,:

"Lenin put before the League of Struggle the task of forming closer connections with the mass working-class movement and of giving it political leadership. Lenin proposed to pass from the propaganda of Marxism among the few politically advanced workers who gathered in the propaganda circles to political agitation among the broad masses of the working class on issues of the day. This turn towards mass agitation was of profound importance for the subsequent development of the working-class movement in Russia." (pp. 16-17.)

AGITATION CAME TO FOREFRONT

But hold on! say our "propagandists." We grant that before this transition in 1895 the Russian organizations did not conduct agitation, or did so only to a negligible degree. But how do we know that when they undertook the "turn toward mass agitation," as the HCPSU says, that propaganda did not still remain their "chief" form of activity? Our "propagandists," in other words, are of the opinion that the turn of 1895 was a change from "propaganda only" to "propaganda chiefly," not to agitation chiefly.

How can we decide? Besides the fact that a transition of the sort our "propagandists" imagine -- a change from no agitation to some agitation, a little bit of agitation -- would hardly be considered a decisive qualitative turn in history, there is also the rather plain testimony of Lenin, who says that agitation was not merely begun, it came to the forefront. Here is an example of how some of our "propagandists," in this case the LMLU, attempt to slide around this point.

Referring to the 1895 "transition to widespread agitation," LMLU writes: "This widespread agitation was combined

with a continuing emphasis on propaganda and the development of the Social-Democratic circles." (Class Struggle 4-5, p. 57.) Ah, what slippery words! "A continuing emphasis on propaganda..." Without actually saying so, the comrades are indicating in this carefully wrought phrase that propaganda was still the chief form of activity, the emphasis (and not merely "an" emphasis). They then quote, quite needlessly, an entire page from Lenin's 1897 essay, "The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats," in order to hide, amidst this mass of words, the one sentence that bears most directly on the issue at hand:

"Inseparably connected with propaganda is agitation among the workers, which naturally comes to the forefront in the present political conditions and at the present level of development of the masses of workers." (Vol. 2, p. 329)

Immediately after quoting the whole page in which this sentence occurs -- and without a word of commentary on this passage, which flies in the face of the "propaganda chiefly" thesis -- the LMLU comrades change the subject. Of course, if these comrades wished to make an argument to the effect that our circumstances today are different; today propaganda should be in the forefront, not agitation as in Lenin's day, no one could object to such a mode of argument. But, instead of frankly and forthrightly stating their disagreement, these comrades try to slide around the issue. How can people be considered worthy of the title of propagandist, one who explains many ideas, if they do not explain but rather try to blabber their way around the one or two ideas on which so many other ideas depend for clarity?

AGITATION INHERENTLY RIGHTIST?

On the other hand, at a point in their argument where quoting Lenin's words a little more extensively is essential in order to grasp the meaning, our LMLU comrades snatch a couple of phrases out of context in order to make it seem as if the turn toward agitation had been the principal factor responsible for the emergence of Economism.

"This rightist trend," (says LMLU) "emerged in part as a result of the turn toward widespread agitation. For just as merely engaging in propaganda work isolates the Marxists from the workers, so too widespread agitation brings them 'into contact with the lower, less developed strata of the proletariat,' and thus can lead them to 'put the demands and interests of the immediate moment in the foreground ... (and) push back the broad ideals of socialism and the political struggle.'" (LMLU, *ibid*, p. 58)

The passages LMLU quotes are from Lenin's "Retrograde Trend." The implication is that agitation, in and of itself, brings with it the danger of right-opportunism. Such a presentation of the question is extremely one-sided and false; for in the first place there is a danger of revisionism in any form of activity (including for example armed struggle), and in the second place, it ignores Lenin's statement that it was not agitation itself, but the Economist influence and teachings over the agitators, combined with a series of other causes, which brought about the opportunist deviation. The agitator, coming into contact with backward workers, Lenin said, "was taught to 'put the demands and interests of the given moment' in the foreground and to push back the broad ideals of socialism and the political struggle" -- he was taught to do this by the Economist theoreticians.

Lenin also cites additional causes which promoted the rise of the Economist trend: the "fragmentary, amateur nature of Social-Democratic work," local isolation, the involuntary absence from the scene (due to tsarist repression) of leaders "who possessed a profounder knowledge and a richer revolutionary experience, as well as a wider political horizon"; many comrades' infatuation with the "fashionable" book of the revisionist Bernstein, the lack of solid revolutionary traditions and continuity, etc.

There is nothing in these passages, in short, to warrant the smug notion presently current among some of our leaders, who try to shift the blame for right-opportunist errors in agitation onto "agitation itself." It is not "agitation itself," but the opportunist leadership of agitation, the

pursuit of an opportunist line, which gives rise to opportunist agitation. The same Economist line which influenced the work of many of the agitators at the time Lenin was writing also influenced the work in the propaganda circles, rife with the preaching of the fashionable opportunism of Bernsteinian revisionism.

Indeed, far from counseling a degree of retreat from widespread agitation, including among the backward workers, Lenin makes a point, in "Retrograde Trend," of calling for the development of different forms of agitation and of propaganda for these strata. The regular newspaper organ of the party, Lenin says, will be "well-nigh incomprehensible" to these workers. Therefore, "different forms of agitation and propaganda must be brought to bear on these strata" (p. 282) to win them over to the party's policy. The Economist line cannot even win over the backward workers, Lenin asserts:

"Whoever forgets political agitation and propaganda on account of the economic struggle, whoever forgets the necessity of organizing the working-class movement into the struggle of a political party, will, aside from everything else, deprive himself of even an opportunity of successfully and steadily attracting the lower strata of the proletariat to the working-class cause." (p. 283)

In short, what is at issue in Lenin's "Retrograde Trend" is not the question of emphasis as between agitation and propaganda, as certain comrades would like to pretend. That issue was settled in principle: agitation came to the forefront. The issue, rather, was one of emphasis as between political agitation and propaganda on the one side, and the propaganda and agitation limited to the economic struggle, on the other.

ACTIVITY AND FORM OF ORGANIZATION

Lenin's essay "Retrograde Trend" does touch, however, on a question that is central to the issue of emphasis as between agitation and propaganda. This is the connection between agitation as a form of activity and the party as a form of organization. This question, it appears, was not yet clearly grasped in the Russian Marxist movement at the time; it is even less clearly grasped by our present-day "propagandist" trend.

Among the Russian Marxist at the time, it is clear from Lenin's words, there were those who feared "that the formation of a revolutionary party conducting a political struggle will interfere with agitation, will push it into the background and curtail the freedom of the agitators." (p. 283, "Retrograde Trend.") (Lenin is speaking of the agitators' freedom to apply those methods of agitation which are best suited to their capabilities and to their audience; not, evidently, to "freedom" of political line.) Such comrades, to put it bluntly, feared that the building of a single unified party would signify that propaganda would become the chief form of activity, that agitation would be pushed "into the background." (Our current "propagandists" never quote this passage....) Unfortunately, Lenin refrains from indicating who, what trend, was responsible for inducing such fears. It could only have been the Economist trend, however, which, besides its views on the nature of agitation, also was the fountain of narrow, limited, parochial, primitive and backward perspectives on matters of party organization. We shall see more proof of this in a moment. In any case, however, in "Retrograde Trend," Lenin moves immediately to allay these fears. The building of a party, he says, will not push agitation into the background. "On the contrary, only an organized party can carry out widespread agitation, provide the necessary guidance (and material) for agitators on all economic and political questions, make use of every local agitational success for the instruction of all Russian workers, and send agitators to those places and into that milieu where they can work with the greatest success. It is only in an organized party that people possessing the capacities for work as agitators will be able to dedicate themselves wholly to this task -- to the advantage both of agitation and of the other aspects of Social-Democratic work." (p. 283, emphasis added.)

Another text written a year later, which our "propagandists" likewise studiously avoid, explores the link between propaganda and agitation as forms of activity and the party as a form of organization in even more explicit detail. In his "Preface to the Pamphlet 'May Days in Kharkov'" (November 1900), Lenin quotes at length the words of Plekhanov about the necessity for a party organization in order to carry on agitation. The word agitation inserted in brackets in the first sentence is supplied by Lenin:

"A necessary condition for this activity (agitation) is the consolidation of the already existing revolutionary forces. Propaganda in the study circles can be conducted by men and women who have no mutual contact whatever with one another and who do not even suspect one another's existence; it goes without saying that the lack of organization always affects propaganda, too, but it does not make it impossible. However, in a period of great social turmoil, when the political atmosphere is charged with electricity, when now here and now there, from the most varied and unforeseen causes, outbreaks occur with increasing frequency, heralding the approaching revolutionary storm -- in a word, when it is necessary either to agitate or remain in the rear, at such time only organised revolutionary forces can seriously influence the progress of events. The individual then becomes powerless; the revolutionary cause can then be carried forward only on the shoulders of units of a higher order -- by revolutionary organizations." (Vol. 6, p. 361.)

REQUIRES NO PARTY ORGANIZATION

This is clear as can be. To carry on propaganda as chief form of activity, no party organization is required. Propaganda as chief form of activity implies study circles as the chief (and "highest") form of organization; and whether these circles are tightly or loosely bound up with each other, or even operate unbeknownst to each other, does not fundamentally affect their operation. To be sure, as Plekhanov says, the lack of a party hampers propaganda activity as well, "but it does not make it impossible." For the activity of agitation, on the other hand, the presence or absence of party organization is a life and death question. The efforts at agitation of which pre-party forms of organization are capable are necessarily limited; they are bound to "remain in the rear," to tail rather than to lead.

How many of our "propagandists" have pondered the question of chief form of activity from this standpoint? Not very many; for to examine this aspect of the question is to come face to face with the inherent illogic of their thesis. To take propaganda, not agitation, as your chief form of activity (during the first main period!) means to concentrate your forces on an activity which does not require a party organization. The existing pre-party organizations, the circles and networks of circles are more or less "perfectly" adequate and sufficient as forms of organization, if this is the chief form of activity which you envision. Why, then, do you speak of "party-building is the chief task" and of "propaganda" (rather than agitation) "as chief form of activity" in one and the same breath? Do you not see what a non sequitur you are committing? You wish to build the party, and at the same time you wish to assign to the party as its chief priority a form of activity for which the building of a party is not essential! In one and the same breath, you are saying "build the party" and "concentrate on pre-party, non-party forms of activity" -- "build the party" and "don't build the party." Can you not see how you lay yourselves open, on the one hand, to the charge that your announced desire for the party is really quite shallow, that you remain infatuated with circle life; and, on the other hand, to the suspicion that the sort of party you intend to build, a "propagandists' party," will have the organizational form of a coalition or federation of propaganda circles, rather than the organizational form of a genuine party?

For the purpose of concentrating on which form of activity is a party form of organization indispensable? This question ought to be on a quiz to test the knowledge of the ABCs of Marxism-Leninism; and anyone

who answers "propaganda" should be sent back to primary school. This question may also be put in a somewhat more "advanced" form, in the form of a chart, if you will, showing the necessary correspondences between the major forms of activity (in the first main period) and the major forms of organization that are necessary and adequate to carry them out:

FORM OF ACTIVITY	FORM OF ORGANIZATION
Propaganda.....	Study circle
Political Agitation	Party
Economic Agitation	Trade Union

Of course, the Party, in addition to its central activity, also conducts propaganda and economic agitation; it organizes study circles and takes part in trade union organization. Likewise, there is nothing to prevent an amalgam of propaganda circles, or the lobbying arm of a federation of trade union leaders, from declaring itself to be a "party" and adopting the trappings, the outward forms, of party organization. History shows many examples of both. However, there is no way of adequately conducting the work of revolutionary agitation other than through the organization of a Leninist party; and conversely, there is no compelling, driving urgency behind the organization of such a party if one intends to concentrate one's forces not on the activity of Leninist political agitation, but on some other form of work.

ADVOCACY OF PRIMITIVISM

The connection between "propaganda as chief form of activity" and "study circles as chief form of organization" is expressed in an altogether "classical" way by the LMLU authors. Apparently quite oblivious to the fact that what they are advocating amounts to pre-party backwardness and primitivism, they write:

"On the practical level, making propaganda the chief form of activity means that the combination of our propaganda activities -- propaganda articles in the newspaper; lengthy articles in communist journals; pamphlets; speeches, lectures and forums; wide-ranging discussions with one or a small number of people; and particularly study circles -- is primary." (Class Struggle No. 4-5, p. 80, emphasis added.)

Precisely! Particularly study circles! Not, of course, that there is anything wrong with study circles per se. There should be more of them, and the establishment of the Party will undoubtedly create the possibility for organizing them on a far broader scale than presently. The point is, rather, that an organization in which study circles are the primary form of organization, where study circles form the sun around which all other activities gravitate -- such an organization is not yet fit to be called a party. The slogan that calls for propaganda to be the chief form of activity in the first main period of "party-building" expresses a desire to linger in the pre-party period, to cling to the forms of activity and of organization of the circle era -- all, to be sure, under the "party" label. It expresses the wish to put off for as long as possible the blessed day when we can say, as Lenin said in 1899, that "we have grown out of the study-circle stage which has become too narrow for our present-day work and which leads to an overexpenditure of forces." ("An Urgent Question," Vol. 4, p. 222.) It is -- in the strict sense which our "propagandists" assign to it -- an anti-Party slogan; and by this we do not mean that it happens to disagree with the line of one or another of those of our present-day circles who are now wrapping themselves in the "party banner," but rather that it is an obstacle to the common advance of all Marxist-Leninists out of the circle era and toward principled unification in the single Party.

Propaganda, to put it in a nutshell, is a form of activity which the party must conduct at all stages of its development. But it is only in the pre-party stage of development, when a proper party organization does not yet exist, that this form of activity assumes the dominant role over all others. The period of building the party in the proper sense, i.e. the first main period in its development in the sense in which Stalin speaks of it, this period only

begins when the era of propaganda circles has been sloughed off and left behind, when factory nuclei have become the basic organizational cells, and when political agitation has become the actual or desired chief form of activity.

INTERNAL COMPOSITION OF PARTY

There is another, related aspect of this matter which also deserves scrutiny. It concerns the internal composition of the party, its cadre, recruitment and leadership.

If propaganda is the organization's principal occupation, it follows not only that study circles are its basic organizational cell, but also that most of its cadre, or its typical cadre, are propagandists. It follows further that such an organization, in order to reproduce itself, will evaluate potential new recruits chiefly on the basis of their merit as propagandists; that its training of members will seek chiefly to produce propagandists, and that new members will, as a general rule, be assigned chiefly to propagandist tasks. Propagandists, it is logical to assume, will also hold the lion's share of leading positions in such an organization. Its principal literary output, its chief organ, will likewise consist chiefly of propaganda (as distinct from agitational) material.

Does such an organization bear any resemblance to a Leninist party? No, it does not. Moreover, such an organizational setup -- modeled more on Plato's Republic than on a Leninist party -- not only would restrict agitation and push it into the background, it would also bring about a harmful lowering of the level of propaganda. But has anyone ever proposed such a type of organization? The answer is, yes; approximately such an organization was indeed proposed, and in Lenin's Russia, by the "intellectualist" wing of Economism, and in none other than the same St. Petersburg League of Struggle whose initial turn to agitation had provided the rudimentary beginnings of a working-class Marxist party in Russia. When Lenin was arrested and sent into exile at the end of 1895, along with other revolutionary leaders of the League, the organization fell under the domination of the Economist line, and this remained the situation for more than half a decade. One consequence of this long period of control, as the editors of the Collected Works of Lenin relate, was that the League's working-class membership (the so-called Workers' Organization) became artificially separated from the intellectual members. The "workers'" section of the League, under the influence of Economist theories, of course pressed for economic agitation as chief form of activity, and constituted itself in organizational forms modeled on trade unions and adapted to trade-union forms of struggle. Meanwhile the intellectual wing of the League, no less under the influence of Economism, pushed a line of parallel backwardness under the "propaganda" banner. (Consult Vol. 6, pp. 552-53.) Lenin's important "Letter to a Comrade on our Organisational Tasks," written in September 1902, contains a refutation of both of these variants of Economism. As Lenin's strictures against the trade-union organizational principles in party-building have been fairly often quoted, we confine ourselves here to quoting Lenin's passages against the "propagandist" aspect.

PROPAGANDA CIRCLES EVERYWHERE?

The Economists proposed, in the first place, that a propagandists' circle should be attached to every circle of party members in each district of the city. (Vol. 6, p. 283.) The idea was, on the one hand, to create propaganda circles everywhere; on the other hand, by "attaching" these circles to the regular party institutions, i.e. to the bodies of the "Workers' Organization," to leave the question of their subordination to central direction vague and unsettled. Lenin criticized both features of the Economists' propaganda plans:

"I now pass on to the question of propagandists' circles. It is hardly possible to organize such circles separately in every district owing to the scarcity of our propagandist forces, and it is hardly desirable. Propaganda must be carried on in one and the same spirit by the whole committee, and it should be strictly centralized. My idea of the matter is therefore as follows: the committee /meaning the

central leadership for the whole city -- Ed./ instructs several of its members to organise a group of propagandists (which will be a branch of the committee or one of the institutions of the committee). This group, using for the sake of secrecy the services of the district groups, should conduct propaganda throughout the town, and in all localities 'within the jurisdiction' of the committee. If necessary, this group may set up subgroups, and, so to say, entrust certain of its functions to the latter, but all this can be done only with the sanction of the committee, which must always and unconditionally possess the right of detailing its delegate to any group, subgroup or circle which has any connection at all with the movement." (pp. 241-42.)

'SCARCITY OF FORCES'

Several points in this passage, which is among those which never appears in our "propagandists'" writings, are worth noting here. To begin with, the "scarcity of propagandist forces." Does this mean that there were few people in the organization who desired to conduct propaganda? No; for as Lenin observes a page later, there were plenty who had the desire, but relatively few who, in Lenin's view, also had the necessary experience. He says (p. 242):

"Incidentally, while on the subject of propagandists, I should like to say a few words in criticism of the usual practice of overloading this profession with incapable people and thus lowering the level of propaganda. It is sometimes the habit among us to regard every student as a propagandist without discrimination, and every youngster demands that he should be 'given a circle,' etc. This must be countered, because it does a great deal of harm."

Our present-day "propagandist" trend should take a lesson from this caution, addressed to the "intellectual" wing of Economism. The sort of "party" organization which our "propagandists" envision, if it is to reproduce itself and to grow to any significant scale, while maintaining the "propaganda as chief form of activity" principle, will inevitably find itself in the position of regarding "every student as a propagandist," of assigning every new recruit to propaganda work, and thus overloading this profession with people who are not capable of doing it well. "Propaganda as chief form of activity," in the sense which our "propagandist" trend assigns to this phrase, ineluctably leads to dragging down the level of propaganda. That is the first point.

'HARDLY DESIRABLE'

Secondly, Lenin asserts that the establishment of propaganda circles in each and every district of town is not only "hardly possible," as we have just seen, but also, "it is hardly desirable." Why not? Because it promotes the scattering and decentralization of propaganda forces. Lenin advocates, by contrast, their concentration and centralization, even specialization in this form of work:

"There are very few propagandists whose principles are invariably consistent and who are really capable (and to become such one must put in a lot of study and amass experience); such people should therefore be specialized, put wholly on this kind of work, and be given the utmost care. Such persons should deliver several lectures a week and be sent to other towns when necessary, and, in general, capable propagandists should make tours of various towns and cities." (p. 243.)

It is plain as day that Lenin's conception of the organization of propaganda work runs counter to the whole grain of our current "propagandists'" notion. For, while the latter conceive propaganda as the chief form of activity of the organization as a whole, Lenin by contrast demands the setting up of specialized bodies within the organization as a whole, bodies which indeed make propaganda their own specialized responsibility, their own chief (or even only!) form of activity. Lenin's design, by means of concentrating and specializing the propaganda forces, aims at raising the level of propaganda and at ensuring the consistency of its political principles; through concentration and specialization, the presentation of politically principled, high quality propaganda is assured throughout

all districts of town and in other towns as well. Lenin's conception, precisely by not assigning propaganda as chief form of activity of the organization as a whole -- by rejecting this scheme -- is actually the best and the only way of achieving in practice the high aims to which our "propagandists" make appeal, namely raising the general theoretical level, promoting a firmer grasp of Marxism, overcoming opportunist deviations, etc. It is also easy to see that Lenin's organizational design lends itself far more readily and effectively than does the intellectualist-Economist scheme to the training of propagandists; and that the rapid advancement of workers into the ranks of full-time propagandists is better assured, more feasible, when specialized bodies exist for this work than when it is relegated to "everybody in general."

IS THIS 'ELITISM'?

But is there not something "elitist" in this design of Lenin's? Such is the view, at least, of the Klonsky circle, except that their "polemics" on this score (which blather about the "genius theory") prudently refrain from mentioning that Lenin's "Letter to a Comrade on Our Organizational Tasks" is their real target. Of course, the charge has often been heard that Lenin's entire conception of party organization is "elitist." All the Right-opportunists from the very start have made this charge, and have waved the banner of "democracy" against the banner of the party of the Leninist type. Against this it must be reiterated that the real elitists are those who do not think the working class, the average worker, capable of grasping the quintessence of Marxism, who therefore confine the agitator to the presentation of immediate demands, and who restrict the presentation of the ultimate aim (if indeed they present it at all) to the narrow confines of propaganda circles. The elitists are those who, from the one side or from the other, or from both sides simultaneously, restrict political agitation. Trade unionism and "propagandism," if it may be called that, are only the two different faces of this identical elitist philosophy.

EGALITARIAN IN APPEARANCE

Those who charge that Lenin's design for concentrating and specializing propaganda work amounts to the "genius theory" are, in effect, giving to the "propaganda-as-chief-form" slogan a "democratic" interpretation: "everyone a propagandist." If we translate this egalitarian-sounding slogan from the language of Martynov, which, as we have seen is the idiom of those who put it forward, into Leninism, and if we put the best possible interpretation on it, it reads: every cadre must educate the working class in the theory of Marxism-Leninism. In this form, it is completely true in its meaning; educating the working class in the theory of Marxism-Leninism is indeed the principal function of the work of political agitation. But our "egalitarians" mean more than this, else they would not have uttered their outcries about "genius theory" in the first place. They oppose paying special attention to propaganda work, i.e. taking measures necessary to ensure that the level of propaganda is raised and that it is carried out along consistent political principles. In the name of "democracy" and "egalitarianism" -- "everyone a propagandist" -- they wish to drag the political content of propaganda down to the average level of capability in this line of work. "Everyone a propagandist" is a way of saying "nobody a propagandist," and the "egalitarian version" of the "propaganda-as-chief-form" slogan is propaganda down to the lowest common denominator -- the level of "every student."

"Everyone a propagandist" is a concealed way of saying "nobody a propagandist." The "egalitarian" version of the "propaganda-as-chief-form" slogan is -- no matter how pure the intentions -- a recipe for liquidating propaganda work, in content and essence if not necessarily in form. This aspect of the matter undoubtedly accounts for part of the sudden popularity this slogan found among people whose own history shows very little propaganda work, a strong tendency toward Economist agitation, a lack of interest in the propaganda literature of our movement -- in short, openly Right opportunist tendencies.

All false egalitarianism and "democratism," however, also contains its opposite. A notable case in point was the old SDS

during the student movement days of the 1960s; rejecting democratic centralism in favor of "participatory democracy" and "decision by consensus," most of this organization was always under the more or less hidden and well-entrenched hegemony of one or another clique. Likewise with the "propaganda" slogan; in appearance, it is very "democratic" -- let everyone be a propagandist -- but this is only an optical illusion. Look at it with a slightly different tilt of the head, and its opposite aspect appears, namely, in this case, that the "propagandists should be the chiefs." Nothing is more misplaced and lacking in awareness than the belief that the "propaganda" slogan somehow guards against the emergence of a so-called "dictatorship by the propagandists." Just the contrary, it lends itself readily to such a "dictatorship," and can even lead directly to it, with the argument that the propagandists -- or those who style themselves such -- should be the chiefs of all activity. If ever there was a notion designed to promote the genius theory, it is that one. In fact, Lenin's design for propaganda organization, precisely because it calls for the concentration and centralization of propaganda work, is best suited for preventing this "threat," real or imagined; for, by setting up a special propaganda apparatus directly under the control of the leading committee in the town, the plan assures that the whole, or practically the whole, of propaganda activity in the area is under central supervision and is being carried on in accordance with the party's policy.

LETTER TO NORTHERN LEAGUE

Lenin's arguments on party organization in his "Letter to a Comrade," incidentally, won the approval of all the worker-members of the St. Petersburg League. (See Vol. 6, p. 553.) That organization thus returned to the path of political agitation from which the rise of Economism, a number of years earlier, had diverted it.

In his "Letter to the Northern League" written the same year (1902), Lenin touches on another aspect of the same question. The Northern League was a part of the *Iskra* trend from the beginning, and was never an Economist stronghold, unlike St. Petersburg. Nevertheless, here too some Economist influences were present. They reflected themselves in the Northern League's program in a form that represented the other extreme of the St. Petersburg variety. Where the latter wished to organize propaganda circles "everywhere," the Northern League's program tended to reject propaganda altogether, except as a means of training agitators. Lenin makes the following comment:

"Recognizes propaganda only to the extent," etc. / Lenin is quoting the Northern League's program. -- Ed. / This is incorrect. Propaganda does not only have this significance; it is not only a means of 'training agitators,' but also a means of spreading class-consciousness in general. The programme goes to the other extreme. If it was necessary to come out against propaganda which some people divorce too much from the tasks of agitation, it would have been better to say: 'in propaganda it is particularly necessary not to lose sight of the task of training agitators,' or something to that effect. But all propaganda should not be reduced to the training of 'experienced and capable agitators,' and the 'training of only individual class-conscious workers' should not be simply 'rejected.' We consider this inadequate, but we do not 'reject' it." (Vol. 6, p. 167)

THE OTHER EXTREME

It appears that the Northern League, viewing the parochial limitations of propaganda as a form of activity in a narrow, one-sided manner, flipped into an agitation only line, or something close to it. It is impossible to read into Lenin's reply any trace of a "propaganda as chief form of activity" line in the sense of our present-day "propaganda" trend. Rather, Lenin evidently concurs with the Northern League's view that propaganda can not be the priority, but cautions them not, on that account, to write it off. The training of agitators by means of propaganda, i.e. the political education of "one or a few" persons, is inadequate, but it is not to be thrown out of the window. -- The Northern League accepted Lenin's advice,

and its representatives were firm Iskra-ists at the Second Congress of the RSDLP a year later.

In short, the theoretical underpinnings of our "propagandist" trend are as feeble as can be. The writings of Lenin, who certainly was in a position to know what was and what ought to be the party's forms of activity, simply do not support the interpretation which our "propagandists" have projected into Stalin's famous sentence fragment. On the contrary; those writings consistently undercut this misinterpretation and invalidate it. The line which our "propagandists" wish to promote to hegemony in our present-day party building struggle was already in Lenin's day a line of primitiveness and backwardness, a line of the intellectual wing of Economism, and an obstacle to the building of the party.

V. POLITICAL AGITATION AND BUILDING THE PARTY

Can agitation serve as the chief instrument in building the party? Our "propagandist" trend, almost in unison, would shout "No!" And this answer is "half" correct; it is correct if by "agitation" is meant agitation of the Economist kind. But there is no such thing as "agitation in general" or "agitation per se." Agitation divides into two; there is Economist "agitation," and there is agitation of the Leninist kind, political agitation. If we are speaking of agitation in this latter sense, which is the only scientifically correct one, then the answer to the above question is a definite "yes." Agitation not only can serve as the chief instrument in building up the party; it was so used by Lenin in building up the Bolshevik party.

The first rudimentary beginnings of a Marxist party of the working class in Russia, we know, came about when the St. Petersburg League achieved the leap forward from propaganda to political agitation as chief form of activity. Yet this advance was almost immediately overturned by the rise of the Economist trend, and Lenin thereafter had to conduct a stubborn battle of several years before the original principles of political agitation once again became dominant.

To gain an idea of the political conditions under which Lenin fought for this method of party-building, it may be enlightening to quote another passage from Lenin's "Preface to the Pamphlet 'May Days in Kharkov'." The immediate strategic aim of the movement at that time (1900) was the convocation of a constituent assembly, i.e. the end of tsarist absolutism and the achievement of a bourgeois-democratic republic. Lenin writes:

"The manifesto distributed in Kharkov on the eve of the First of May this year raised this demand, and we have seen that a section of the advanced workers fully appreciated its significance. We must make sure that all advanced workers understand clearly the necessity for this demand and spread it, not only among the masses of the workers, but among all strata of the people who come into contact with the workers and who eagerly desire to know what the socialists and the 'urban' workers are fighting for. This year when a factory inspector asked a group of workers precisely what they wanted, only one voice shouted, 'A constitution!'; and this voice sounded so isolated that the correspondent reported somewhat mockingly: 'One proletarian blurted out....' Another correspondent put it, 'Under the circumstances,' this reply was 'semi-comical.' (...) As a matter of fact, there was nothing comical in the reply at all. What may have seemed comical was the incongruity between the demand of this lone voice for a change in the whole state system and the demands for a half-hour reduction in the working day and for payment of wages during working hours. There is, however, an indubitable connection between these demands and the demand for a constitution; and if we can get the masses to understand this connection (and we undoubtedly will), then the cry 'A constitution!' will not be an isolated one, but will come from the throats of thousands and hundreds of thousands,

when it will no longer be comical, but menacing." (Vol. 4, p. 364-65.)

There, incidentally, we have one more refutation of the thesis of our WVO "historians," who tell us that the majority of the working class in Russia already in 1899 were fervent socialists. (See above.) As a matter of fact, the mass of the workers were not even fervent, conscious democrats yet, much less socialists. The advocates of the immediate strategic aim of the struggle at that time were "isolated voices" in a crowd, so alone that the bourgeois press patronized and mocked them. Moreover, not even all or the majority of the advanced workers fully "appreciated the significance" of the political aim of the struggle, but were absorbed almost exclusively (as Lenin tells us in What Is To Be Done) with the struggle for immediate reforms. It was under such conditions -- and not in conditions when the majority of the advanced workers were already united around a correct line and when the majority of the working class was already sympathetic -- that Lenin proposed at once to return to the task of political agitation. He speaks of the necessity to "make sure that all advanced workers understand" the aim in the same breath with the necessity to "spread it not only among the masses of the workers" but also among all other strata with whom the workers come into contact. And this is entirely logical; for it is impossible (or pointless) to try to win and to unite the advanced workers without indicating the definite form of activity for which one intends mainly to enlist them, i.e. without indicating what is to be done.

HOW MANY VOICES?

What of today? Is the situation so different, as regards the immediate strategic aim of the proletarian struggle in the U.S.? If a "factory inspector" -- or, say, a campaigning politician, or a reporter -- were to ask some sizeable group of workers what they "really want," how many voices would shout "The Proletarian Dictatorship!?" Certainly very few, perhaps none, depending on the place and circumstances. The one or two voices who did speak up in this way would probably be treated by the bourgeois and opportunist press with the same mocking and patronizing air as in the circumstances of Kharkov, 1900, described by Lenin.

Marxism-Leninism and opportunism differ fundamentally in their attitude toward a fact, an empirical finding, such as this. For opportunism, such a fact is a reason not to begin or to resume political agitation, but rather to retreat and to lower the political level and content of one's work, and to consign the question of a change in the entire state system to the intellectuals' propaganda circles, if that. A cleverer opportunist will invent "reasons" such as: it is necessary first to win over all or most of the advanced workers, only then (years from now) can political agitation be begun; or (same thing in different form): first a long period of propaganda, later on spread the political aim among the masses.

For Leninism, on the contrary, the fact that the aim is understood by very few among the masses and not even by all the advanced workers is a reason to press ahead with propaganda and with agitation, precisely in order that the "isolated voices" should no longer be isolated, but that the demand should come out of the throats of thousands and millions.

OPPORTUNISM IS PASSIVE

Opportunism is characterized by a passive, yielding, tailist attitude in the face of "public opinion" and the mass movements; Leninism by an active, driving, shaping and guiding stance. Because very few people understand what we are fighting for, therefore all advanced workers should take up the task of spreading our aims among the masses. This is the Leninist approach to the question.

By what means did Lenin propose to carry out this plan of activity? As everyone in our movement knows (more or less), the principal instrument to unite the advanced workers for the purpose of carrying out political agitation -- and for actually carrying out and leading such agitation -- was a newspaper, Iskra. (Iskra, as we have already mentioned, combined agitation and propaganda, with the chief stress on agitation. A magazine stressing propaganda, titled

Zarya (Dawn) was launched at the same time; only three issues of it appeared, however. See "Draft Declaration of Iskra and Zarya" Vol. 4, p. 326; fn. p. 452. Lenin refers to Iskra as "our main product" -- see Vol. 6, p. 314.)

MISSED THE MAIN IDEA

The central role of Iskra in building the Bolshevik party would hardly seem to call for further commentary at this stage in our movement. In appearance, this ground has been ploughed over dozens of times, most of all by our "propagandists," and it hardly seems possible to say anything new on it. Nevertheless, we venture to say that our "propagandists," who have read and re-read What Is To Be Done (the book that launched Iskra) if they have read nothing else, have missed something, namely the main idea. The title of the book is in the form of a question: What is to be done? What is the answer to this question? Our "propagandists," just as much as our Economists, hem and haw and evade the point, or give answers that run off into the blue. And yet this is not so difficult a question; one only has to shed the prejudices inculcated by opportunism, in order to answer it. What is to be done? Answer: organize political agitation.

(There was a time when our "propaganda" trend understood this, or appeared to understand it, at least to a great extent. Thus we find in PRRWO's pamphlet "U.S. Pregnant with Revisionism," a "classic" text of the "propaganda" trend, the following phrase: "The working class will be trained in political exposure through propaganda and agitation..." etc. (p. 11, Ch. 4). Unfortunately this, and similar phrases by others, remained mostly a phrase.)

Let us listen again to Lenin, even at the risk of quoting once again some words that have often been recited:

EDUCATE THE CLASS

"We must take up actively the political education of the working class and the development of its political consciousness." (WITBD, Vol. 5, p. 400.)

These are simple words, expressing a gigantic task: the political education of the working class -- the class as a whole. Not: of the advanced or "best elements" only, of a few or relatively few, but of the working class. Can it be imagined that the methods of propaganda can be chiefly relied on as the means to this end? Even simple arithmetic, given the average size of propaganda circles and their average duration, will show that this necessary, indispensable and useful method of education is inadequate if our goal is the political education of the whole working class, or at least of its majority, before the end of the millenium. Not that the time factor is the principal one -- we have, most likely, much less time than until the year 2,000 -- but it must not be forgotten, either. The objective conditions wait for nobody and no organization; and it is the height of irresponsibility to imagine that our movement can go putting along forever in its primitive, divided, fragmented condition.

FULFILLING OUR TASKS

"The question arises," Lenin goes on, "what should political education consist in? Can it be confined to the propaganda of working-class hostility to the autocracy? Of course not. It is not enough to explain to the workers that they are politically oppressed (any more than it is to explain to them that their interests are antagonistic to the interests of the employers. Agitation must be conducted with regard to every concrete example of this oppression (as we have begun to carry on agitation round concrete examples of economic oppression). Inasmuch as this oppression affects the most diverse classes of society, inasmuch as it manifests itself in the most varied spheres of life and activity -- vocational, civic, personal, family, religious, scientific, etc., etc. -- is it not evident that we shall not be fulfilling our task of developing the political consciousness of the workers if we do not undertake the organization of the political exposure of the autocracy in all its aspects?" (p. 400)

These lines are directed against the Economist trend, with its desire to confine exposures to the economic sphere; yet, interestingly, they likewise cut at our "propaganda" trend. Indeed, this is not surprising, since the "propaganda" trend is rooted in Economism and merely represents one of its branches. So, for example, there is nothing "contradictory" in the fact that WVO, a leading defender of the indefensible "propaganda" line, is also known for the barren Economist character of its agitation, and recently headlined an article on the oil workers' struggle with one of the favorite Economist catchphrases: "Oil Workers, Turn Economic Struggle Into Political Fight Against Capitalism." (WV, Jan. 1977, p. 2.) This is nothing more than the slogan "lending the economic struggle itself a political character," which Lenin rightly branded as simply the demand for political concessions, reforms, from the government. (What Is To Be Done, p. 405.) This is "political agitation" -- trade unionist style; it is "politics" but not Leninist politics.

TRAINING THROUGH EXPOSURES

"A basic condition for the necessary expansion of political agitation is the organization of comprehensive political exposure. In no way except by means of such exposures can the masses be trained in political consciousness and revolutionary activity." (p. 412)

This is said as plainly as can be, and expresses the function of an Iskra-type newspaper -- the task which such a newspaper calls on all advanced workers to undertake -- in a nutshell. This, too, cuts both against our Economist trend, with its "Worker" papers, whose "political" content, if any, is that of trade unionist rather than Leninist exposure; and at the "propagandist" trend, which -- insofar as it clings to its "propaganda" formula -- approaches the political training of the masses, if at all, only with a "bad conscience."

Is political agitation (political exposure) an applicable method only in countries like Russia, which have not yet (at the time Lenin is writing) had a bourgeois revolution and established bourgeois-democratic 'freedoms'? This is an opinion brought forward by WVO as an "argument" in favor of restricting political agitation. In addition to the other complications which such an argument involves, it should be noted that Lenin refutes it pointblank; the principle of political agitation has international validity:

"Hence, activity of this kind" -- Lenin continues directly from the passage just quoted above -- "is one of the most important functions of international Social-Democracy as a whole, for even political freedom does not in any way eliminate exposures; it merely shifts somewhat their sphere of direction. Thus, the German party is especially strengthening its positions and spreading its influence, thanks particularly to the untiring energy with which it is conducting its campaign of political exposure." (p. 412)

NOT FROM ANY BOOK

"In order to become a Social-Democrat," Lenin continues a few sentences later, "the worker must have a clear picture in his mind of the economic nature and the social and political features of the landlord and the priest, the high state official and the peasant, the student and the vagabond; he must know their strong and weak points; he must grasp the meaning of all the catchwords and sophisms by which each class and each stratum camouflages its selfish strivings and its real 'inner workings'; he must understand what interests are reflected by certain institutions and certain laws and how they are reflected. But this 'clear picture' cannot be obtained from any book. It can be obtained only from living examples and from exposures that follow close upon what is going on about us at a given moment; upon what is being discussed, in whispers perhaps, by each one in his own way; upon what finds expression in such and such events, in such and such statistics, in such and such court sentences, etc., etc. These comprehensive political exposures are an essential and fundamental condition for

training the masses in revolutionary activity." (p. 413)

Two parts of this passage, which has been quoted more than once in our literature, especially deserve comment here. Firstly, observe that Lenin prescribes the organization of comprehensive political exposures not merely for the purpose of "raising political consciousness" in general, i.e. of raising it perhaps a little bit, but for the specific purpose of educating the worker to "become a Social-Democrat" -- a Marxist-Leninist. Note secondly, and in connection with this point, that Lenin insists that such consciousness, such a 'clear picture,' cannot be obtained from any book. Of course, Lenin is not attacking books. The point, rather, is that, in order to turn an average worker into an advanced worker, in order to make a worthy party member out of him or her, what is above all required is not books but precisely political agitation, political exposures. This high, this lofty conception of political agitation evidently is something very different from what our "propagandists" can grasp; political agitation, to them, seems at best a supplement or auxiliary to the "book method," whereas Lenin posed the question just the other way around. If you wish to extend the influence of Marxist theory, if you wish to expand the ranks of the party with new recruits of a high political caliber, if you wish to assure that ever more advanced workers are promoted from among the intermediate, if your aim, in short, is to create a vanguard of the working class, then your principal duty (in addition to providing and creating good books!) is to organize comprehensive political agitation, political exposure.

'JUST EVANS AND NOVAK'

Lenin's way of posing the question, it is obvious, stems from a fundamentally different position than that of certain of our comrades who mechanically repeat, like Buddhist monks touching a prayer-roll, "propaganda to build the vanguard, agitation to rouse the masses to action" and similar threadbare incantations, which are so much Economist nonsense. Such comrades think that "explaining to the workers" that they are exploited, and that the politicians represent the big capitalists, is the acme of profundity, of "political education" of the working class. In reality, such comrades generally are unable even to explain correctly and without falling into petty-bourgeois fallacies what "exploitation" consists of, and their "explanations" of the ruling class, the moment an ounce of concreteness is called for, could not satisfy the curiosity of an intelligent twelve-year old. As for systematic, day-in, day-out political exposure, which follows among other things the continuous conflicts among the different monopoly capitalists and their politicians, and between them and other classes and strata, including but not limited to the working class, these pathetic "intellectuals" and "educators of the working class" turn up their noses and declare pompously that all this is "just Evans and Novak" (Washington columnists). Just in this tone did the Economists in their day throw up their hands at Iskra's analyses of political events and exclaim: "Good Lord, what is this -- a Zemstvo paper" -- a review of affairs in the capital? (Lenin, "Political Agitation and the 'Class Point of View'," Vol. 5, p. 339.)

In reality, the scarcity of Marxist-Leninist "Evans and Novaks" is one of the most singular weaknesses in the whole of our present-day Marxist-Leninist literature, and if we could obtain even one competent Marxist-Leninist "Washington affairs commentator" we would gladly give ten or twenty of our windbags -- or the whole lot -- in exchange.

A BUS RIDE AWAY

One of the most striking illustrations of the neglect of Lenin's teachings on political exposures may be sampled in the activity, or inactivity, of the Marxist-Leninists who happen to inhabit Washington, D.C. There they are, a bus ride away from the centers of political power of U.S. imperialism, from a vast crashing, grinding machinery that daily turns out tons of material useful in one way or another for political exposure, and they fail (in the typical case) to avail themselves of even one bit of this opportunity. Most of them have

never visited the Library of Congress, attended a single Congressional committee hearing (many of which are open to the public) or bothered to leaf through any of the thousands of reports, statements and documents of all kinds to obtain material with which to expose the government. They act just as if they were living in Des Moines or Omaha -- and even comrades in those places sometimes do more work of political exposure (of their local governments) than is carried on by Marxist-Leninists in the capital. This neglect of the duty of political exposure is, in its origins, a hangover of the "New Left" moralistic rejection of "politics;" and it is, in its objective consequences, an invaluable aid to the bourgeoisie and to opportunism of all kinds. When the Marxist-Leninists do not do their duty of political exposure, it means that the field of political exposure remains monopolized by those who are not Marxist-Leninists, and who thus are given a free hand to educate (miseducate) the working class and to train working-class "cadre" for bourgeois (especially liberal) politics.

THE MOST PRESSING DUTY

"Our business as Social-Democratic publicists is to deepen, expand, and intensify political exposures and political agitation." (What Is To Be Done, p. 414.) The intellectuals, Lenin also admonished, must talk less to the workers "of what we already know and tell us more about what we do not yet know and what we can never learn from our factory and 'economic' experience, namely political knowledge. You intellectuals can acquire this knowledge, and it is your duty to bring it to us in a hundred- and a thousand-fold greater measure than you have done up to now; and you must bring it to us, not only in the form of discussions, pamphlets, and articles (which very often -- pardon our frankness -- are rather dull), but precisely in the form of vivid exposures of what our government and our governing classes are doing at this very moment in all spheres of life." (p. 416-417.) The "organization of comprehensive political agitation" is "the most pressing duty now resting upon Russian revolutionaries." (p. 420.)

How many of our intellectuals understand their tasks in something approaching this fashion? Not many. All too often our intellectuals think they have "done their duty" as political educators if they have succeeded in imparting to one or a few workers an acquaintance with one or a few of the classic texts of Marxism. And this is important, invaluable work; it must never be forgotten. But it is still not enough. How many are able to use not only the classic writings, but life itself -- the everyday events -- as their textbook for teaching Marxism-Leninism to the workers?

IDEAL AUDIENCE

"The ideal audience for political exposure is the working class, which is first and foremost in need of all-round and live political knowledge, and is most capable of converting this knowledge into active struggle, even when that struggle does not promise 'palpable results'." (p. 430-31.)

Our opportunists, "Left" and Right, doubt this thesis of Lenin's; they disagree with it. If truth be told, they think that only the "petty-bourgeois intelligentsia" is interested in political exposures (if that were so, why are they themselves not interested?), while the working class, by contrast, forms the ideal dumping ground for every hackneyed phrase and half-baked piece of simplemindedness that comes out of their typewriters. "It's good enough for the workers" is the unspoken motto of these comrades. Under the guise of "writing in the language of the workers" they either evolve a monstrously stupid "slang" -- a "new language" (which deserves to be called "prolgrunt") expressly invented by the intellectuals for the workers' consumption (a la RCP); or, what is perhaps worse, they lower not their language but their very thoughts to this imaginary childishness of their intended audience (a la Klonsky) -- a style that merges seamlessly with the most empty-headed rhetoric of our "Left" phrasemongers. It does not occur to them that the working class, in order to become the ruling class (in order to prepare itself now for its future role) must achieve a complete mastery, a full and concrete knowledge, of all aspects of life, especially political life, and that there is no way to

achieve such mastery except through the medium of political exposure. The "lack of interest" in political exposure and political agitation signifies, at bottom, a "lack of interest" -- to put it politely -- in preparing the working class to become the ruling class.

"Political exposures are as much a declaration of war against the government as economic exposures are a declaration of war against the factory owners. The moral significance of this declaration of war will be all the greater, the wider and more powerful the campaign of exposure will be and the more numerous and determined the social class that has declared war in order to begin the war. Hence, political exposures in themselves serve as a powerful instrument for disintegrating the system we oppose, as a means for diverting from the enemy his casual or temporary allies, as a means for spreading hostility and distrust among the permanent partners of the autocracy." (p. 431)

Good Lord! Declare war against the government!? Isn't that tantamount to declaring one's intention to overthrow that government? How shocking! My dear fellow, you simply don't realize that in our ("Marxist-Leninist") press it is quite kosher to speak of overthrowing the trade union bureaucrats, the segregationists, the fascist trend, and even the "system itself" -- but to express, in direct and forthright terms, the idea of overthrowing the government, tut tut, it just isn't done. (Besides, it's probably illegal!) -- Such are the unspoken thoughts that lie behind the restriction of political agitation (or the reduction of its political content) by our opportunists. Of course, the issue is not the phrase: "overthrow the government;" the issue is to communicate that idea to the masses (who are far more receptive to it than our opportunists think -- else it would not have been outlawed); and to communicate it in connection with the widest possible variety of events and issues, drawing them all together into a single picture, so that the masses see and feel that this action is their only possible, logical and desirable alternative, and that the dictatorship of the proletariat is as necessary to them as bread and butter. Such agitation, such a declaration of war against the government, has nothing in common with "inciting to riot," since the conditions for the revolutionary assault are obviously not yet present; it is a war of "laying siege," as Lenin said, of preparing the conditions for the future assault. Recall that Lenin issued this "declaration of war" more than three years before the outbreak of the 1905 revolution, and that neither he nor anyone else, of course, could have any way of knowing whether this war of siege would have to be carried on for one year or twenty before it showed "palpable results," i.e. before the government was overthrown, or before a real attempt could be made to overthrow it. Nor can anyone know this in our case. What is essential is not to know how long the war will last, but to begin it, by spreading its aims and objectives among the masses.

POLITICAL AGITATION IN TRADE UNIONS

Since we have mentioned the trade unions, let us recall that Lenin assigned political agitation also as the principal duty of Communists engaged in trade union work. And this task is by no means exhausted -- it is hardly begun -- through participation in the kind of "politics" which the trade unions themselves promote, and which can very well include, besides donations to bourgeois candidates and registration drives, also such forms as rallies, demonstrations etc. to "bring pressure" or "show support" for one or another of the bourgeois politicians. Such trade unionist agitation -- what Lenin called "political agitation on an economic basis" -- can and does take place without the intervention of Marxist-Leninists. It is "political" in the loosest sense of the word, i.e. it is concerned with the government; but it does not pose the question, either ideologically or practically, of a change in the whole system of state power. "The task of the Social-Democrats, however, is not exhausted by political agitation on an economic basis; their task is to convert trade-unionist politics into Social-Democratic political struggle, to utilise the sparks of political consciousness which the economic struggle generates among the workers, for the purpose of raising the workers to the level of Social-Democratic political consciousness." (p. 416)

This presentation of the question, simple and straightforward as it is, is nevertheless too complicated (?) for some of our present-day opportunists to grasp. An example is the Klonsky circle's condemnation, last summer, of the so-called "economics-only attitude" of the union leadership (Local 1199) in the New York hospital strike. The leadership "refused to bring any of the real political issues... into the strike." And what might these "real political issues" be? "Quality health care, racial discrimination or the general political struggle against the cutbacks" is the answer! The trade union leaders are being accused by the Marxist-Leninists for not engaging in trade-unionist politics. (And this, despite the fact that this same trade union leadership organized a demonstration outside the Democratic Party convention to support the liberal Democrats who were raising the "real political issues" of the Kennedy health care bill, the busing issue, and the budget in the hall.) Evidently, those who think like the Klonsky circle that the "real political issues" are the trade-unionist political issues, the reform political issues, can never develop either a high appreciation or an effective grasp of what is meant by Leninist political agitation. (The Call, July 19, p. 1)

'REVOLUTIONARY LEADERSHIP'?

It is indispensable that Marxist-Leninists fight for leadership within the trade-union struggle, both in its "purely-economic" and in its trade-unionist political aspects. But it is an Economist illusion to suppose that such leadership by itself, and within the bounds of that struggle, amounts to revolutionary leadership. This was an idea of Martynov, and just such a fallacy is in the minds of those who try to focus the attention of the workers exclusively or chiefly on their trade union misleadership, and propagate the idea of replacing it with "revolutionary leadership," without indicating for what political tasks such leadership is required. Lenin's reply to Martynov can also apply to them:

"Can Martynov cite an instance in which leading the trade-union struggle alone has succeeded in transforming a trade-unionist movement into a revolutionary class movement? Can he not understand that in order to bring about this 'transformation' we must actively take up the 'direct leadership' of all-sided political agitation?" (p. 419)

Indeed, Lenin goes further and places stress on trade union work precisely because it is an excellent arena for political agitation, and because the unions themselves "can also become a very important auxiliary to political agitation and revolutionary organization." (p. 457, emphasis added.) So far in our movement, the idea of connecting trade union work with the work of political agitation has made only relatively little headway, and the more fundamental idea that trade union work (work in the trade unions) must be governed and guided by the demands of political agitation -- that it forms an auxiliary, one of the auxiliaries of political agitation -- appears to be one of those "forgotten words" of Lenin's.

PARTY-BUILDING AND AGITATION

But let us return to the central question of party-building, to deal once more with a point which troubles especially our "propagandists." Isn't it putting the cart before the horse to advocate political agitation before we even have the Party? Doesn't the Party have to be built before agitation on any scale becomes possible? And doesn't this mean that a lengthy period of "propaganda as chief form of activity" is required -- to "build the Party" -- as a prelude to agitation?

Such questions, whether they stem from innocent confusion or from opportunism, reveal that, despite all the years during which What Is To Be Done has been on our movement's reading lists, its central point is still far from being grasped. For, in this work, Lenin says at one and the same time that "wide political agitation" is what "our Party most urgently requires at the present time," (p. 489), and that "our primary and imperative practical task" is "to establish an organization of revolutionaries capable of lending energy, stability, and continuity to the political struggle." (p. 446.) In other words, Lenin calls for political agitation and for building the

party at the same time. To our consistent "propagandists," this would appear to be a contradiction; but this is because these comrades are not consistent with Leninism. They do not see that the conduct of political agitation (to be sure, in combination with propaganda -- nobody denies this) is itself a means of training cadre, of educating them in Marxism-Leninism and of organizing the Party and setting it on its feet.

"...the masses will never learn to conduct the political struggle until we help to train leaders for this struggle, both from among the enlightened workers and from among the intellectuals. Such leaders can acquire training solely by systematically evaluating all the everyday aspects of our political life, all attempts at protest and struggle on the part of the various classes and on various grounds.... The publication of an All-Russian political newspaper must be the main line by which we may unswervingly develop, deepen, and expand the organization" i.e. the Party. (pp. 500, 501.)

LEARN WAR THROUGH WAR

Political agitation, in short, is not only a means of educating its audience; it is also the means to educate and to train the agitators themselves. One learns warfare chiefly through warfare. It is also in the course of conducting the war that the organization of the "army" is built, developed and perfected. In just such terms does Lenin describe the project for an agitational newspaper:

"Around what is in itself still a very innocuous and very small, but regular and common, effort, in the full sense of the word, a regular army of tried fighters would systematically gather and receive their training. On the ladders and scaffolding of this general organisational structure there would soon develop and come to the fore Social-Democratic Zhelyabovs from among our revolutionaries and Russian Bebel's from among our workers, who would take their place at the head of the mobilised army and rouse the whole people to settle accounts with the shame and the curse of Russia. "That is what we should dream of!" (pp. 508-09)

In invoking the names of Zhelyabov, the famous leader of the Narodnik organization "People's Will" of the early 1880s, and of Bebel, the outstanding agitator and leader of the German party at that time, Lenin indicates more eloquently than any long-winded description could, how the organization of widespread political agitation is at the same time the organization of the vanguard, the Party.

AN ACADEMIC MODEL

It is in reality our "propagandists" who have a confused and self-contradictory picture of how party-building proceeds. Of course, our "propagandists" are not to be blamed for being distrustful of "agitation" and having a low opinion of it, inasmuch as that opinion was shaped by the low and untrustworthy form of "agitation" practiced, chiefly, by the RU; but this does not excuse departing from Leninism off the opposite edge. In truth, the "propaganda" line for "party-building" is modeled on the academic pattern: first a long period of "education" (behind closed doors, usually); only then and thereafter comes "activity." This model is no good even for education in the ordinary sense; and it is doubly no good for party-building. Our "propaganda" line envisions party-building as something that must of necessity isolate the builders for a protracted period from the masses; and this is largely the case if and insofar as propaganda (in this sense) really is the chief form of activity. Not so if it is political agitation. As Lenin replied to a certain Nadezhdin, "... he imagines that troops in the course of systematic organization are engaged in something that isolates them from the masses, when in actuality they are engaged exclusively in all-sided and all-embracing political agitation, i.e. precisely in work that brings closer and merges into a single whole the elemental destructive force of the masses and the conscious destructive force of the organization of revolutionaries." (p. 512.)

The question of fusion is here presented in direct connection with party-building, and not as something that takes place "after" the party is built. It is not a question of "first build the party" and then proceed to fuse it with the working-class movement, as some of our "propagandists" are inclined to conceive it; but rather: through political agitation, fuse Marxism-Leninism with the working-class movement in the very process of building the party, and in order to build it.

PREPARATION FOR REVOLUTION

There is another point, finally, which was touched on earlier but which bears repeating here. Those who commit themselves to the practice of propaganda as chief form of activity in the first main period -- in the sense of our "propaganda" trend -- are also declaring, implicitly or explicitly, that the transition to agitation as chief form belongs to the second period. That this conception of our tasks in the second period -- the period of mass action -- is a Menshevik and liberal approach has already been shown. The chief task of the party in the period of revolutionary mass action is not more verbal persuasion -- although that, too, obviously, must not be in the slightest neglected, and must even be stepped up -- but rather the organization and direct leadership of revolutionary mass action, in order to bring it to a victorious conclusion. Those who have waited until the opening of this "second period" to "pass over to mass agitation" will find themselves not only ideologically at the tail of the movement, but practically so, as well. It will be difficult enough already for those who are experienced in political agitation to pass over to the new tasks of revolutionary leadership called for by the mass upsurge -- although this is the best possible preparation. But those organizations whose chief emphasis has been in the work of the study circles and in activities that revolve around study circles, will find it impossible. The revolution, Lenin pointed out, "first and foremost, will demand of us experience in agitation, ability to support (in a Social-Democratic manner) every protest, as well as direct the spontaneous movement, while safeguarding it from the mistakes of friends and the traps of enemies." (p. 513, emphasis added.) In building the party today, therefore, we must keep in mind not only the impulses and the necessities of the immediate moment, but above all we must keep the future in mind, and act today so as to best prepare for the bigger tasks ahead. Our "propagandists" are shortsighted in this regard. How do they propose to transform a cluster of study circles (with or without the formal shell of a "party" around it) into the leadership of a proletarian insurrection, on the very eve of that uprising? By what magic do they believe they can perform this trick? There is no way to be prepared for the "second period" other than through solid experience in political agitation. Our open Economists will seek to betray the revolution; that is plain. But our "propagandists" will simply miss the revolution; it will proceed as though they did not exist, and had never existed. Let these comrades therefore, before it is too late, engrave in their minds, and act upon the following words of Lenin's, which express in a nutshell the answer to the question "What Is To Be Done":

"Those who make nation-wide political agitation the corner-stone of their program, their tactics, and their organizational work, as Iskra does, stand the least risk of missing the revolution." (p. 513.)

PARTY'S PRINCIPAL ACTIVITY

To leave no doubt on the question of party activity during the whole period preceding the revolution, whether conditions are stormy or not, Lenin says a page later:

"The principal content of the activity of our party organization, the focus of this activity, should be work that is both possible and essential in the period of a most powerful outbreak as well as in the period of complete calm, namely, work of political agitation, connected throughout Russia, illuminating all aspects of life, and conducted among the broadest possible strata of the masses." (p. 514)

Again, about a year later, in a resolution Lenin prepared for a conference in advance of the Second Congress, Lenin wrote:

"The conference declares its solidarity with the Manifesto of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party and confirms that it considers the overthrow of the autocracy the immediate task of the Party. The conference declares that in its work for the accomplishment of this immediate task as well as of its ultimate aim Social-Democracy lays chief stress on all-round and nationwide political agitation which calls on the proletariat to fight against all manifestations of economic, political, national, and social oppression, whatever section of the population this oppression is directed against." (Vol. 6, p. 105, emphasis added.)

More quotations of this sort could be cited. They show beyond a doubt that there is an answer to the question of what was the chief form of activity of the Party of Lenin in the process of its formation and organization. That chief form of activity was political agitation. This conclusion, as we have seen, is entirely in harmony with Stalin's famous sentence fragment, when it is understood in its context and read correctly; but it is entirely in disharmony with the general "party-building" line of our present-day "propaganda" trend, not to mention our open Economist trend. The question naturally arises, in view of the great clarity and definiteness of Lenin's views on this question of the party's primary activity, how was it possible for our "propaganda" trend to "miss" this point, and to construe an entirely different line of conduct? Hadn't our "propagandists" at least read Lenin? The answer is that our leading "propagandists" in reality have as slight a grasp on Lenin as they have on the concrete conditions obtaining in the U.S. They have read and continue to read Lenin in order to pillage his works for quotes that seem to fit into their case, and not in order to understand him. They are interested in the aura of authority which Lenin's works have earned, and not in the scientific truth from which that authority emanates. Their modus operandi on this question (as on others) was to snatch out of its context an isolated phrase or two in order to try to justify, to dignify and to legitimize a political line of backwardness, primitivism and opportunism which they evolved independently of any study, and out of a subjective and idealist inspiration.

TO FORM A PARTY

The objective conditions are ripe in our country for the formation of a political party that sets as its immediate strategic aim the overthrow of the dictatorship of the imperialist bourgeoisie and its replacement by the dictatorship of the proletariat.

What does it mean to form a party with such an aim? There are many comrades who fully agree on our strategic task and on its basic political content, but who are not clear on what it means to form a party for this purpose. It is our "propagandist" trend's bad influence which is chiefly responsible for spreading unclarity on this question. For, according to the line of the "propaganda" trend, the chief activity of the "party" when formed will hardly be much different than the chief activity of many of our present-day circles: "propaganda" in either case. So what will be the difference? No one can doubt that the propaganda activity of our circles on the whole has made valuable contributions, and that propaganda work will always remain an indispensable part of the party's activity; moreover, there is much work to be done in raising the level and scope of the existing propaganda work. This notwithstanding, however, to form a party worthy of the name means to form an organization that can no longer be content with propaganda (in this sense) as its chief form of activity. To form such a party means to form an organization which concentrates on a higher, a historically, theoretically, practically and organizationally more advanced form of activity, namely the activity of spreading our aims beyond the boundaries of our movement and of fighting for the influence of these ideas among broader and broader circles of the masses of working people. To form a communist party worthy of the name is to form an organization that knows how to make political agitation for the immediate stra-

tegic aim its chief form of activity; and conversely, to form an organization that is able to make political agitation for this aim its chief form of activity is merely another way of saying: to form the Party.

POSTSCRIPT: AGAINST 'RELATIVISM'

ON THE ADVANCED WORKERS

We must, in conclusion, say some supplementary words on the question of the advanced workers, which was touched on earlier.

It is a question which goes straight to the heart of the party-building struggle. For what is needed, evidently, is not a party primarily of the revolutionary intellectuals drawn from other classes, a party for the working class and (to a certain extent) in the working class, but rather a party of the working class, composed primarily of Marxist-Leninist working-class leaders. It is the job of the revolutionary intellectuals drawn from other classes themselves to set such a party on its feet, i.e., as Lenin put it, to make special leaders from among the intelligentsia unnecessary. This means that, with the growth of the party, a larger and larger proportion of its ranks (at all levels) will consist of workers, of "hereditary" workers if you like, who assume the predominant role in all its activity and lead it in fact. (This does not mean that the intellectuals are no longer of use; on the contrary, only a predominantly working-class vanguard party will be able to recruit and to utilize intellectuals on a really large scale; but this is another question.)

LED BY WORKERS

The party we are struggling to build must be a party primarily composed of and led by workers. This point is so much of an axiom that no one will dispute it outright, even though the struggle to implement it in practice is far from achieving victory. The dispute centers rather on the other facet of the question, namely on the political qualities and even intellectual qualities that characterize the worker-leaders of the working class.

Lenin, in an oft-quoted passage from his 1899 essay "Retrograde Trend," characterized advanced workers in this fashion: they are those

"... who can win the confidence of the laboring masses, who devote themselves entirely to the education and organization of the proletariat, who accept socialism consciously, and who even elaborate independent socialist theories.... At a time when educated society is losing interest in honest, illegal literature, an impassioned desire for knowledge and for socialism is growing among the workers, real heroes are coming to the fore from amongst the workers, who, despite their wretched living conditions, despite the stultifying penal servitude of factory labor, possess so much character and will-power that they study, study, study and turn themselves into conscious Social-Democrats -- 'the working-class intelligentsia.' This 'working-class intelligentsia' already exists in Russia, and we must make every effort to ensure that its ranks are regularly reinforced, that its lofty mental requirements are met and that leaders of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party come from its ranks." (Vol. 4, pp. 280-81.)

BARGAIN-BASEMENT VANGUARD?

Was it only in old Russia that the working class was capable of bringing forward from its ranks a vanguard of such high qualities; is the working class in the U.S. today incapable of doing so? Or, to put it another way: was it only in old Russia that the proletariat needed such heroes, while we, here in the U.S. today, can get by with a bargain-basement version?

It may seem somewhat offensive to the reader to pose such questions. Does anyone in our movement today deny that the U.S. working class can bring forth advanced workers fully on a par with Lenin's standards? Does anyone argue that overthrowing U.S. imperialism is a less demanding task, and that people of a lesser cut can achieve it,

than overthrowing old tsarism and the old Russian bourgeoisie?

No one argues it in just those terms. To do so would be to expose the argument to quick defeat. Nevertheless, the substance of just these ideas, and of others related to them, has been put forward in our movement from several quarters. The common concern of this trend (or trends) is to water down Lenin's definition of the advanced workers, allegedly for the purpose of "adapting it" to the "present situation" and the "conditions" in the United States. The "philosophical" banner of this "adaptive" trend is relativism.

We have already glanced at WVO's definition of the advanced workers. It runs: "... they must be open to studying MLMTT and must be independent leaders of the working class, staunch and consistent fighters who are able to win the confidence of the class.... they are not passively open to socialism or indifferent towards it. They actively seek it out and take a stand on it" etc. (WVO Journal No. 4, p. 2.)

In other words, the advanced by WVO's standards are still seeking for what Lenin called socialist political consciousness; they are still pupils of Marxist politics, while Lenin's advanced workers were its teachers. WVO has "promoted" Lenin's intermediate workers to the "advanced" category; it has, in other words, simply reduced the caliber of the proletarian vanguard.

'NOT STATIC BUT RELATIVE'

WVO attempts to justify this discounting operation with a broad historical-philosophical assertion: "The question of what the political level of the advanced workers is therefore is not static but is relative.... The political level of the advanced is historically conditioned by the level of fusion between the working class movement and the communist movement." (WVO Journal No. 4, pp. 1, 2.)

The same idea also occurs to the Klonsky circle, which begins its approach by agreeing with Lenin's definition "in general," but adding: "Owing to a wide variety of factors in contemporary class society, many of these workers" (meaning the "advanced workers" today) "may not actually 'study, study, study,' or devote themselves 'entirely to the education and organization of the proletariat'... Especially in the absence of a party and with our own weaknesses and errors in arming advanced workers with theory, the advanced in today's U.S. may not correspond exactly with Lenin's definition. But the key aspects of defining the advanced are the same: They are consciously pro-socialist workers who assume active leadership of the struggle among their fellow workers." (Position Paper, internal, July 1976, pp. 5, 6.) In other words, even workers who don't study, educate or organize -- intermediate by Lenin's standards -- are here defined as "advanced," under cover of the relativist phrase "owing to a wide variety of conditions in contemporary class society."

We should note also the weasely phrase "pro-socialist," which can mean a vast number of different things. Unlike WVO, which is sophisticated enough to note at least in passing that by "socialism" it means Marxism-Leninism-Mao-Tsetung Thought, the Klonsky circle sidesteps all particulars.

The two passages we have quoted are not the only examples that could be cited of the relativist tendency, which seeks to lower the level of the vanguard by appealing to "conditions," but they are a fair sample, of which the former represents the "original" and the latter the copy.

MARXISM IS NOT RELATIVISM

Marxism-Leninism, of course, does not at all reject grasping concepts in relation to their historical conditions. On the contrary. But Marxism-Leninism must not be confused with relativism, i.e. with the denial of any objectively existing, knowable model, standard or truth. "To make relativism the basis of the theory of knowledge," Lenin said in Materialism and Empirio-criticism, "is inevitably to condemn oneself either to absolute skepticism, agnosticism and sophistry, or to subjectivism." (Vol. 14, p. 137.) WVO's assertion that "The political level of the ad-

vanced workers is ... relative" represents such a piece of relativist sophistry. To what is this political level relative?

Is this level defined by reference to the historical experience of the international communist movement? Or is the reference point the average level that happens to obtain in any given place at any given time?

If the former, then there exists an objective, knowable standard (which is itself historically evolved); and an advanced worker may be recognized as such in all countries. Advanced workers everywhere, despite the tremendous variety of situations, different degrees of experience, etc., will have a common basic political understanding and sense of purpose.

If the latter (the relativist option), then the term "advanced" has no objective meaning at all. Everyone is "advanced" by virtue of being "more advanced" than the average in a given town or factory, etc. The rearguard of one place can be the vanguard of another; every bourgeois democrat, every striker and every professor may be "advanced" in a backward context; and the ranks of the "advanced" include a vast heterogeneous mix without common language or purpose. Everything dissolves into a subjective muddle.

NO REAL GRASP OF HISTORY

It is characteristic of our relativists that, despite their talk of "historical conditions" and so forth, they have no grasp of history. They do not investigate the question of the advanced workers from a materialist, historical standpoint in order to determine its actual content; they merely apply a carving knife to Lenin's words in order to pare that political content down to fit their own horizons.

When we look at Lenin's definition of the advanced workers from a historical materialist standpoint, we come to a conclusion that is just the opposite of our relativists'. To be an advanced worker today is not to stand on a lower rung than the advanced workers of 1899; just the contrary, it means to stand higher. This becomes apparent when we examine the part of Lenin's definition that is antiquated.

The portion of Lenin's description of the advanced workers which really requires modifications in light of historical experience -- and, in our opinion, the only section that needs revising -- is that which refers to "socialism" and "Social-Democracy." This is woefully inadequate, obsolete and misleading for our day.

Lenin, we saw, speaks of the advanced as those who accept "socialism" consciously and who "turn themselves into conscious Social-Democrats." That was in 1899, and represented the concepts and terminology appropriate to the development of the international Marxist movement at that time. It is not adequate for our epoch. The term "socialist" and obviously also "Social-Democrat" is too broad and vague; it cannot convey what is meant. Ever since the betrayal of Marxism by the leaders of the Social-Democratic (socialist) parties of the Second International in 1914, the terms "socialist" and "Social-Democrat" ceased to mean what they meant in 1899. They even fell into high disrepute as partisan labels, as indexes of a definite organized trend. That is why the Russian "Social-Democratic Labor Party" in 1918 changed its name to the Russian Communist Party, and why in 1921 the newly formed Communist International stipulated that all parties wishing to belong to it must likewise adopt not only the new nomenclature, but also the new tasks and organizational forms of communism.

FROM SOCIALISM TO COMMUNISM

It was precisely in the sense of this transition, for example, that Lenin in 1921 appealed to the parties of the Western countries to undertake the task of "changing -- all along the line, in all spheres of life -- the old socialist, trade unionist, syndicalist and parliamentary type of work into a new type of work, the communist." In this sense likewise Lenin called for a new approach, "one that is not socialist, but communist; not reformist, but revolutionary." ("Left-Wing Communism," Vol. 31, pp. 98, 99 and elsewhere.)

It is precisely also in the sense of this transition that Lenin speaks at the same time about the task, in the Western European countries, of "winning the vanguard to communism," which, he adds, these parties had in the main accomplished between 1914 and 1921. What was the meaning of this task, concretely and historically? It meant that, in most of the Western countries, a vanguard of the working class, a core of advanced workers, already existed. These advanced workers had, in the main, been raised up and trained by the old Social-Democratic parties when they were still Marxist parties. These advanced workers were class-conscious socialists, partisan Social-Democrats, convinced Marxist champions of and in the working-class struggle. Then came the betrayal; the majority of the leaders went over to the imperialists and viciously attacked the October Revolution. Hence the task was to win the existing, class-conscious and consciously socialist workers' vanguard away from its leaders, who had become utterly reactionary, and to lead them, as Lenin said, "on the side of Soviet government and against parliamentarianism, on the side of the dictatorship of the proletariat and against bourgeois democracy." (ibid., p. 92.)

DICTIONSHIP OF PROLETARIAT

Consequently, the meaning of what it was to be part of the vanguard of the working class -- an advanced worker -- also underwent a change. Previously, to be advanced meant to be a conscious socialist and Social-Democrat; thereafter, it meant to be a conscious Communist and adherent of the Third International. Previously, the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat had not come to the forefront (-- the first congress of the RSDLP in 1898 even failed to include it in its declaration--); thereafter, it became a burning issue. Those workers who, for one reason or another, failed to make the transition to the new conditions and new tasks, ceased to be in the vanguard of their class.

And yet still today, 60 years later, the Klonsky circle still considers "socialists" as advanced workers! (Even "pro-socialists," which implies mere sympathizers.) Isn't it about time the Klonsky circle caught up with the first giant struggle against revisionism in this century, and began explaining to the workers (and to its intellectuals) that, for many decades, to play a vanguard role in the class struggle has meant, at a minimum, to be a communist and to uphold the dictatorship of the proletariat?

Or does it make no difference? Let us see. The Second International, after its betrayal, did not vanish from the scene as a political force. It exists today, and even holds annual or biennial conferences attended by its leading representatives from a score of countries. Who are these personages? For example, the Zionist leader and butcher of the Palestinians, Golda Meir, is a member of the Second International and a conscious Socialist. So is Indira Gandhi. So is Willy Brandt, British Prime Minister James Callaghan, Portuguese Premier Soares, etc. etc. Can we consider the Israeli, Indian, German, etc. workers who follow the lead of these Socialists today, and who are active leaders of trade unions etc. under the control of these parties, as the "advanced workers," the "vanguard" of their respective countries?

SOCIALISTS GALORE

Nor is this question confined to foreign countries. In the leadership of last year's New York City hospital strike, for example (we are speaking of Local 1199), there were not only CPUSA revisionists but also Social-Democrats of the Second International type; and these have their men in a number of other unions as well. There are the spin-offs of the old U.S. Socialist Party as well, e.g. the Harrington lobby group in the Democratic Party, the Dellinger circle (which publishes Seven Days, a twice-monthly slick-format newsmagazine); there is NAM and the "intermediate socialist organization" trend, and a dozen others, all conscious of themselves as Socialist or "pro-socialist." They too have some presence, however slight, in the working class. But are they "advanced workers"? Are they the "vanguard"?

Moreover, the history of the movement did not stop in 1921, either. Since the revisionist betrayal by the Khrushchov gang in the Soviet Union following the death of Stalin, the term "communist" in many countries has acquired the same double meaning and ill repute that befell Socialism earlier. There are two kinds of workers who call themselves (and think of themselves as) Communists -- the members and sympathizers of the revisionist parties, and the genuine communists, who are anti-revisionists and accept Marxism-Leninism-Mao-Tsetung Thought as their guide. Are the workers who are committed to the revisionist CPUSA today also part of the vanguard of the U.S. working class? Are revisionist workers advanced workers?

To conceive of the "advanced workers" in such a way that this question is answered in the affirmative -- a la Klonsky circle -- is to break with the fundamental principles that the international Marxist-Leninist movement has been struggling to establish throughout this century. Workers who remain committed to the CPUSA today, two decades after its irreversible decay into revisionism, can no more be considered the "advanced elements" of the working class than can the Indian workers who follow Indira Gandhi or the Israeli workers who follow the ruling Labor Party, etc. The advanced workers, more than 50 years ago, broke with "International Socialism" and consigned it to the dustbin of progress; for two decades now they have likewise been abandoning, and have consolidated the break, with the phoney Khrushchov-Brezhnev "Communism," and have exposed the utterly reactionary, rearguard, bourgeois, capitalist, imperialist and fascist character of this degenerate trend.

WHAT FACTORS?

We should like to hear one of our young relativists try to explain to one of the veteran revolutionaries of the old Communist Party, when it was a communist party, why it is that the vanguard workers "in those days" upheld the dictatorship of the proletariat, but why today it is allegedly no longer necessary -- why today a mealy-mouthed phrase or two about "socialism" is enough! What is this "wide variety of factors in contemporary class society" of which the Klonsky circle speaks, and which allegedly relieves the advanced elements of the working class of the basic mission of upholding and fighting for the proletarian dictatorship?

To cite the betrayal of the CPUSA, its irreversible degeneration into revisionism, as a "factor" or "condition" for this discounting operation, as both WVO and the Klonsky circle do, is illegitimate. It is precisely because of the revisionist betrayal that it is all the more necessary to keep the political standards high, and to insist that none deserve the name vanguard of the working class who neglect or slide around the question of the proletarian dictatorship. The approach of WVO and of the Klonsky circle (which is in line with the lead set by RCP) means simply to "adapt" oneself spinelessly to the revisionist betrayal and to the "conditions" created by it. "Because the CPUSA went revisionist, we must lower the standard of advancement; because the CPUSA rejects the dictatorship of the proletariat, therefore we must not mention it." This is how the reasoning runs. What is this but conciliation to revisionism and capitulation to it?

CANNOT MEAN LESS

Since the founding of the Third International already, being an advanced workers has meant being a worker-leader who is a conscious communist and, as such, upholds the dictatorship of the proletariat. Today it cannot mean less than that.

The advanced workers today are those who can win the confidence of the working masses, who devote themselves entirely to the education and organization of the proletariat, who consciously uphold the dictatorship of the proletariat, and who do so in theory and practice even independently, in the absence of a Party. They are real heroes who come to the fore from among the workers and, despite poverty, oppression and deprivation, possess so much character and will power that they study, study, study and become conscious fighters for Marxism-Leninism-Mao-Tsetung Thought. They are leaders in their own right in the struggle to build the Party within the struggles

of the working class; they guide the study, the agitation and all other Marxist-Leninist activity. They are, in short, the vanguard of the working class on its historic march toward the dictatorship of the proletariat, socialism, and communism.

But are there such workers in the U.S. today? There certainly are. There are not only those revolutionary veterans of the older generation of Communist workers, who long ago broke with the revisionist CPUSA and carried on the fight independently -- the Nanny Washburns, Harry Haywoods, Odis Hydes and others; but there are also the hundreds of workers of the younger generation, educated over the course of the last two decades by the Marxist-Leninist movement, and who remain active, leading fighters within its ranks, or, if they are for some reason separated from the movement, actively seek it out and spread its influence. Such a "working class intelligentsia" -- an ideological and practical working class leadership that accepts Marxism-Leninism-Mao-Tsetung Thought as its guide -- exists today in the United States.

A VAST DETACHMENT?

But aren't there rather few of such advanced workers today -- workers who are advanced by the Leninist standard, when that standard is interpreted in the light of historical experience? Undoubtedly, there are rather few. Moreover, most of them are, analogous to their counterparts in 1899 Russia, enrolled in one of the organizations of our movement, or in close contact with it. (On this point, the LMLU's eclectic article is correct and should be defended.)

We are not living in the early 1920s, nor in the late 1950s, fresh after a major break with revisionism in the international movement, when a big, organized, class-conscious Marxist vanguard created in previous decades exists, and needs only to be won away from its traitor "leaders." This old, former vanguard of the working class has long ago either advanced into the ranks of Marxism-Leninism-Mao-Tsetung-Thought, or it has fallen into political decay. Nor can we look outside our ranks for a vanguard of the working class created by the radical-democratic, revolutionary-nationalist and anti-imperialist movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s. There, too, the "sorting-out process," if we may borrow a phrase from WVO, has been in the main completed: some have advanced to Marxism-Leninism-Mao-Tsetung-Thought, and have become part of the existing contingent of advanced workers in this country -- indeed, they make up the largest portion --; or they have not. The Communist revolutionary movement of the 1920s, 30s and 40s, and the non-Communist radical movements of the recent decades, have left a legacy of millions, even tens of millions of workers who have been touched or brushed in one way or another, directly or indirectly, by their ideas and activity. This work of political education was not wasted; it has left its marks on completely "average," even on backward workers. What it did not and could not possibly do is to bring forth an army-sized contingent of vanguard workers, a vast detachment of conscious Marxist-Leninist leaders of the working class -- so many that those who have enlisted in our own ranks form only a small fraction of the total, so that we are compelled to say that most of the vanguard of the working class still stands outside the Marxist-Leninist movement. This notion amounts to self-deception; and behind this illusion lies a political purpose.

The idea that the majority of the vanguard of the working class today exists outside the ranks of the Marxist-Leninist movement has been put forth in its clearest form by the Klonsky circle. Last summer a leading member of this clique claimed that the number of "advanced workers" in the U.S. stood in the "tens of thousands." This has now been toned down for public consumption to read merely "thousands." Since the number of advanced workers in the ranks of the various Marxist-Leninist organizations totals in the hundreds rather than in the thousands, it is clear that, in the opinion of the Klonsky circle, most of the existing vanguard of the working class stands outside the Marxist-Leninist movement.

This idea dovetails completely with the Klonsky circle's labeling as "vanguard" anyone who is "pro-socialist," including Social-Democrats, revisionists and others who stand for "socialism" but oppose the dictatorship of the proletariat.

What sort of Marxist-Leninist movement can this be if the great majority of workers who are genuinely advanced have allegedly steered clear of it all these years, and not taken part in it?

If the workers who are under the influence of revisionism and Social-Democracy are "advanced," then what is to be said about the workers within the ranks of our movement, who reject revisionism new and old? Are both "equally advanced"? Is one to be considered "every bit as much" part of the vanguard as the other, in line with the Klonsky policy of blurring over all lines of demarcation between Marxism-Leninism and revisionism? (See M-L FORWARD No. 1, p. 12.) Were the major struggles against revisionism in the working-class movement of this century in vain, meaningless?

If those who uphold the proletarian dictatorship and those who do not are equally "advanced," then what reason is there for the working class to follow the one or the other? If Marxist-Leninist and non-Marxist leaders are equally capable of leading the working class forward, then what reason is there for the workers to rely on the Marxist-Leninists for leadership? Why should they not put their trust in "other leaders" -- in "another vanguard," to put it exactly? It is clear that the Klonsky circle's line that the majority of the vanguard detachment of the working class stands outside Marxism-Leninism-Mao-Tsetung Thought, in the present concrete situation, is only another expression of the Browderite capitulationist views of the Klonsky circle on the question of leadership by the Communist (M-L) Party. (See M-L FORWARD No. 1, pp. 14-17.)

A REACTIONARY FALSEHOOD

The line that the majority of the existing vanguard of the working class stands outside the ranks of our movement, which sounds so "bold" and "grand," is actually a windy falsehood with a reactionary intent. It is aimed against the hundreds of advanced workers within the ranks of our movement, who form its core and the solid guarantee of its growth and its future; it aims to discredit the struggles this genuine vanguard has waged against revisionism and for the dictatorship of the proletariat, and it seeks to reduce the genuine advanced to the level of ordinary "socialist" reformers and revisionists.

"The newspaper that wants to become the organ of all Russian Social-Democrats," Lenin wrote in 1899, "must, therefore be at the level of the advanced workers." This truth holds even more strongly for the Party itself; it, too, in its program, organization, theory and activity must be at the level of the advanced workers. Is it not evident, therefore, what harm is done by the theories of "relativism," which conciliate to the revisionist betrayal, and, speciously citing "conditions," seek to pin the "vanguard" label on theory and practice that are not vanguard in character, and can even be revisionist? The relativist doctrine has nothing in common with the concrete study of concrete conditions, which is the heart and soul of Marxism. It is an anti-Marxist ideology, a retrograde trend which has arisen within the movement to build a genuine Communist Party and seeks to divert it onto the path of revisionism.

But isn't the number of advanced workers, by Lenin's definition, "terribly" small? All our opportunists are seized with panic at this thought; they all expect to "find" the vanguard ready-made, to relieve them of the responsibility of political education and training of the proletariat. But, dear comrades, how should the number of Leninist advanced workers be anything but quite small at this point, in view of the fact that one main part of our movement has been preoccupied for some years almost exclusively in economic agitation, and another main part has been working mainly within the narrow, parochial confines of propaganda circles? The ranks of the advanced cannot be reinforced at the pace that history demands of us -- there can even be a net loss -- by means of these activities. Instead of putting the blame on Lenin's definition, which you say is "too high," too "demanding," you should put the blame on yourselves for evading Leninist political agitation, the chief form of work by which the ranks of the advanced are reinforced, trained, and multiplied. Even if there were only one dozen

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genuine advanced workers in this country today, that dozen, united into a single Party which makes Leninist political agitation the "cornerstone of its program, tactics and organizational work" (Lenin, What Is To Be Done), would more quickly grow into a powerful revolutionary vanguard of tens and hundreds of thousands of advanced workers of the Leninist stamp, at the head of a mobilized army of millions of workers, than can a dozen Economist and/or "propagandist" circles or "parties" based on a watered-down, cut-rate and opportunist concept of the qualities and tasks of the working-class vanguard. Yes, there are few people; but there is also a mass of people. There are few today who grasp the overall aim of the historical movement; but there are millions who can and will grasp it if it is brought to them and explained to them in concrete connection with their everyday struggles, and among these millions there are hundreds of thousands who will step forward as full-fledged leaders on a par and side by side with the present "few." All that is needed is a method of work for connecting up the present "few" with the masses without a reduction of the political level, and an organizational framework suited to carrying out such a method of work. Needed, in short, is a Leninist party, a party of political agitation, which will spread the consciousness of the immediate strategic aim in connection with every tactical struggle among the broadest masses, until the cry for the dictatorship of the proletariat will not be an isolated one, but will come from the throats of the millions. When that day comes, and it will surely come, then the emancipation of the working class and the oppressed nationalities from the yoke of the imperialist dictatorship, and the beginning of a bright new future, will not be far off.

A FOOTNOTE ON WVO'S NOTION OF FUSION

It is impossible to read even one or two pages of WVO's Journal No. 4 without running into things that flagrantly contradict Marxism from several aspects at once. We have already touched on several different but related aspects of WVO's notions of "history" and of the political level of the advanced workers, but we cannot close this subject without taking note of an additional point. "The political level of the advanced workers is historically conditioned by the level of fusion between the working class movement and the communist movement," WVO asserts (p. 2). Evidently, WVO has confused "fusion" with "dilution," as in the dilution (or concentration) of a chemical, say, a dye, in a solvent. The color of a chemical solution does indeed depend on the amount of dye that is poured into it, i.e. on the level of concentration of the dye in the solvent. But the whole point of political fusion is not that the "dye," the "red," should dissolve in the working class and turn it all slightly pinkish! The point is that a section of the working class, as a rule through the active intervention of the communists, becomes just as "red," -- usually, more intensely and deeply so -- as the communists themselves. What depends on the degree of fusion is not so much the "political level" and the qualities of dedication and commitment of the advanced workers, but rather the number of advanced workers who exist. Advanced workers are the embodiment and the living proof of the existence of fusion between the Communist and the working-class movements. They are actively, consciously Communist workers. As the level of fusion advances or retreats -- and it can certainly do both, as Lenin already pointed out in regard to the time when Economism held sway -- the number of active, conscious Communist workers rises or wanes. But an advanced worker who remains an active conscious Communist leader remains an advanced worker regardless of whether there are few or many, whether fusion is at a low or high level; an advanced worker does not change from "deep red" to "pink" and "pastel" and then perhaps back again, as the level of fusion diminishes and rises. To posit that the advanced workers "change color" ("political level") with the level of fusion, like chameleons, is simply to try to legitimize a policy of swimming with rather than opposing the opportunist, revisionist tide.

Another Klonskyite 'Switch'

'PEOPLE DEVOID OF ALL PRINCIPLE'

"The tactics of agitation in relation to some special question, or the tactics with regard to some detail of party organization may be changed in twenty-four hours; but only people devoid of all principle are capable of changing, in twenty-four hours, or, for that matter, in twenty-four months, their view on the necessity -- in general, constantly and absolutely -- of an organization of struggle and of political agitation among the masses." -- What is To Be Done.

These words of Lenin's are brought to mind by the latest switch, or seeming switch, in the line of the Klonsky circle on the question of agitation and propaganda.

Hardly nine months have passed since the Central Committee of the October League, on the proposal of the Klonsky circle, adopted the line of "propaganda as chief form of activity." What a struggle there was at that time over the meaning of this phrase, taken from a sketch of an essay by Stalin!

Two distinct lines emerged at that time. "Propaganda" here means propaganda in the strict sense, as distinct from agitation, said the Klonsky circle in chorus, having "studied up" on the question in the immortal works of WVO and the LMLU. No! "propaganda" here means propaganda in the broad sense, the spreading of ideas, as distinct from mass action, was the reply of one voice, who wrote three papers and a study guide on the subject, including one paper expressly focusing on Stalin's controversial sentence fragment.

How was the issue finally put? Said the one dissenting voice: if the phrase "propaganda as chief form of activity" is meant in the broad sense in which it was intended, I can vote "yes." If it is put in the narrow sense, I shall vote "no." By a ruling from the chair, the question was put in the narrow sense. All voted in favor, one voted against.

That was July 1976. Now, in The Call of Feb. 14, 1977, on pp. 8-9, we find the disputed passage of Stalin's quoted, along with this bland remark in parentheses:

"Editors note: Here the Russian phrase used by Stalin refers to propaganda in the broad sense of the propagation of revolutionary ideas, encompassing both agitation and propaganda."

Nine months earlier this was the crux of the heresy propounded by that "arch-revisionist and lover of the bourgeoisie," Nicolaus; today it is the accepted truth, conveyed blandly in a parenthetical note, as if this had always been the Klonsky circle's view.

Patience and irony, Lenin once remarked, are essential qualities for a Bolshevik. Irony, because the Call article in which this tacit confession that Nicolaus was correct on this point is conveyed, is also dressed up as a "polemic" against Nicolaus, i.e. against the individual whom the Klonsky circle "expelled" for putting forward the view on this point that the Klonsky circle has now adopted for its own. And patience, too, because -- who can tell? -- in another nine months the Klonsky circle may be compelled to adopt as its own yet additional points of line against which it is presently "polemicizing" with all the resources of invective and character assassination it can muster.

Naturally, there is in the Klonsky circle's Feb. 14 article no hint of an admission of error on its part, no suggestion that the Klonskyist proposal to the CC of July 1976 was, in its central thesis, mistaken. The point is long past when anyone expected open, timely self-criticism of its errors on the part of the Klonsky circle.

A valuable hint of an admission of error, however, occurs in passing in a "Report on the Struggle With Nicolaus -- By DB," which the Klonsky circle distributed among its cadre, and a copy of which has reached M-L FORWARD. It says there on p. 23 that "In the struggle against Nicolaus, we also

made some errors of emphasis in our formulation that 'propaganda should be the chief form of work.'" DB then proceeds to "restate our basic line as it has been clarified (!!) on this question." This "clarification," of course, differs by 180 degrees from the line adopted in July (and "formulated," incidentally, by this same DB) on the basic point of what is meant by "propaganda" in the disputed sentence fragment.

Of course, DB lacks the frankness to state, even for internal consumption, that the pivotal point of the July proposal was incorrect; that the CC was wrong to adopt it, and that a vote against that proposal "as formulated" was correct. For to admit this would pull the rug out from under the Klonsky circle's reactionary campaign of demagogy and suppression which was launched directly after the CC meeting against the person who voted "no," in order to "prove" that anyone who votes against the Klonsky circle must be a revisionist.

UNCOMFORTABLE IMPLICATION

Try as DB might to avoid this uncomfortable implication, to skirt the issue and conceal its substance under a heap of nonsense, the cadre of the October League -- insofar as they have not allowed themselves to become mental prisoners of the Klonsky circle -- will not fail to see it. If the line of July, on its central point, was wrong, then to launch "merciless blows" and stir up a storm against someone for having voted against it was doubly wrong.

In any case, the cadre must now defend the new interpretation published in February. To do so, they must be armed with arguments against those who still hold to the old, narrow misinterpretation, which they themselves espoused for nine months. Unfortunately, and precisely because it does not plainly admit that its previous line was mistaken, the Klonsky circle is unable to arm its cadre with arguments against that line. (To do so would be to arm them with arguments against the Klonsky circle.)

As a result, the OL cadre are left in the lurch in ideological struggle. If they want a point-by-point refutation of the narrow, false construction of "propaganda as chief form of activity," -- if they intend to win a battle of propaganda against it in ideological struggles -- they will be forced to sneak their ammunition out of the pages of M-L FORWARD....

"Sneak"? Yes, they will have to do so on the sly, because the Klonsky circle, in its abovementioned "Report," has "directed all OL members to have absolutely no contact with Nicolaus whatsoever." (p. 10) Since it is known that Nicolaus edits M-L FORWARD, reading M-L FORWARD constitutes "contact" with the forbidden individual.

Not so long ago, the Klonsky circle condemned the Avakian crew for prohibiting RU and RCP cadre from reading The Call. Today, the same arrogance.

The Klonsky circle's recognition that Stalin's sentence fragment refers to propaganda in the broad sense -- however belated, grudging and hypocritical this admission is -- is to be welcomed. It is a step in the correct direction. However, all good things have their limits. In this case if propaganda in the strict sense is not the chief form of activity, then what (in the strict sense) is? In lieu of a straight answer, we get more Klonskyite verbiage: "While agitation should quantitatively dominate our work (...), propaganda plays the decisive role." (The Call, Feb. 14.) In other words, most of the forces of the organization should be concentrated on a form of activity that is not decisive? Make sense of that if you will. The tearing apart of quantity and quality is a feature of all metaphysical thought, and can never give concrete guidance to practical work.

The Klonsky circle's line, furthermore, remains stuck in its same anti-Leninist rut on the question of political agitation.

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ion. While paying lipservice to political agitation, the Klonsky opinion remains that it is "revisionist" to say that Leninist political agitation should be the chief form of activity of the party in the first main period. But who was it that declared that political agitation is "the cornerstone of the program, the tactics and the organizational work" of the party? It was Lenin in What Is To Be Done. Was Lenin, too, a "revisionist"?

How many months will have to pass before the Klonsky circle admits (internally) that it may have made another "error of emphasis" on this point, and before another 180-degree reorientation is announced in an editor's note in parentheses?

TAILED 'WING' AND CENTRISTS

Highly futile and self-defeating also are the Call's attempts to link the line of political agitation with the "centrists" of the Guardian and with the former "Wing." For, as the Klonsky circle certainly ought to know, the Guardian's Irwin Silber explicitly declared almost a year ago already, before the Klonsky circle, in favor of "propaganda as chief form of activity," the same as the "Wing." The truth is that the Klonsky circle tailed both the "Wing" and the Guardian in adopting the "propaganda" line -- and to this day, it has not been able to draw a line of demarcation against that line.

It will be interesting to watch, therefore, what develops when the Klonsky circle takes on the RCP on this set of questions, as it has promised to do (one of these days). The first attempt, in The Call Feb. 14, did not go beyond a restatement of the commonplace truth that agitation and propaganda must be combined -- a point which everyone, Nicolaus included, has been making against the RCP(RU)'s policy of separate newspapers for about five years, and which virtually the whole of the former "Wing" press has been making against the PRRWO-RWL line (or alleged line -- PRRWO denies it) for more than a year now. The Klonsky circle, in now "rediscovering" this truth and proclaiming it in big letters, is like a kid bragging about graduating from grade school and having learned the alphabet -- three years behind his classmates. If the Klonsky circle intends to grapple more deeply with the line of the Avakian crew, and to achieve something more than a re-run of old PRRWO & Co polemics, it will firstly have to make a clean and principled break with the line of "propaganda" (in the strict sense) as chief form of activity, including with its organizational implications; and secondly, it will have to drop its present pose that all "agitation" is the same -- "just agitation." It will have to make the "discovery," in other words, that there really is a fundamental difference after all between Economist and Leninist political agitation (just as Nicolaus maintained all along), and it will have to acknowledge that all the snotty remarks about "mere agitation" and "agitation in general" that now drip from the lips of the Klonsky "propagandists" were also "errors of emphasis." How many months will it take for this next step?

Truly, only people devoid of all principles are capable of changing, more often than they change shoes, their view "on the necessity -- in general, constantly and absolutely -- of an organization of struggle and of political agitation among the masses." (Lenin)

CAPACITY FOR UNPRINCIPLEDNESS

What the Klonsky circle lacks in principles, however, it more than makes up for in its capacity for unprincipledness. Let us see how DB, in the role of hatchetboy, goes about his work of perpetrating the hoax that Nicolaus advocated alliance with the liberal imperialists. "It is on the question of the ruling class and the liberal imperialists in particular that Nicolaus most clearly exposed himself as a defender, prettifier and supporter of imperialism," writes DB in his internal "Report." There then follows a "quote" from an internal paper by Nicolaus, which DB cites as follows: "In my opinion we should and must form alliances (with the liberal leaders) but only on the condition that we maintain within the alliance our right to criticize...." DB then continues, saying "This general call for unity with the liberals is perhaps the most

telling of all the statements Nicolaus made throughout the course of the struggle." ("Report" p. 14.)

Here is the original text, exactly as written, from which DB, in his fashion, quotes the allegedly damning passage; the paragraph occurs at the end of a paper that is sharply critical of the Klonsky policy of neglecting political exposure of the liberal politicians:

"All the above, concerning our policy toward liberals and reformists and the manner of exposing them, is basic in order for our party (when it is formed) to maintain independence and initiative. We have not yet touched on the question of alliance, namely whether or not and on what conditions it is permissible and obligatory for us to engage in united action (tactical alliance) with liberal and reformist leaders (apart from the revisionists). In my opinion we should and must form alliances, but only on condition that we maintain within the alliance our right to criticize and expose our allies, and on the condition that our allies actually fight for the immediate demands, and not merely say a few phrases. However, in the present situation of our movement and of our organization, the problem of how to maintain our independence and initiative is more urgent than the problem of when and with whom to form tactical alliances. The reason is that we have not yet thoroughly and completely analyzed the errors of our past experiences with 'other leaders' whom we trusted and relied on for a time (e.g. Early Mays, Miller, Sadlowski, 'Worker Sam,' etc.) To eliminate from our thinking the last holdovers of 'trust in other leaders' is the precondition to taking up successfully the question of tactical alliances." (p. 18 of the paper on the articles.)

Let the readers judge whether this is, as DB pretends before the world, a "general call for unity with the liberals," and with the "liberal imperialists" (members of the ruling class) at that. What is actually stated in this "damning" passage? That it is permissible and obligatory under certain conditions to form tactical alliances concerning immediate demands with liberals and reformists in the trade union or community struggles, people of the stripe of Mays, Miller, Sadlowski, and even more obscure individuals; but that a thorough break must be made with the line of trusting and relying on such people before the question of such alliances can even be taken up.

And this is "the most telling of all the statements Nicolaus made throughout the course of the struggle," according to DB! Well, comrade DB, if this is the "most telling" stuff you can bring before the court of public opinion, including the opinion of the OL cadre, then you are wasting people's time. All that you are "exposing" with such tactics is your own insincerity and lack of substance. You are not hanging Nicolaus with this rope, you are hanging yourself.

ANOTHER SAMPLE

Here is another sample. DB reports to the OL cadre that Nicolaus says "you can't rely on the liberals to be for revolution," as if they were for revolution at all." ("Report," p. 15.) Again let's see the original source from which DB quotes. The full paragraph runs as follows:

"It is obvious that you cannot rely on liberals to be for revolution. Liberals are for reform in order to prevent revolution. This is elementary. What needs to be understood in addition, however -- and what the recent events illustrate once again so vividly -- [the reference is to liberal Sen. Schweiker's acceptance of the vice-presidential nomination on the Reagan ticket last August. -- MN, note added] -- is that you cannot rely on the liberals to fight for anything progressive at all, not even for the simplest economic and political reforms under capitalism. Liberals fight for reform only when the spectre of revolution is at hand, not otherwise; and even then they fight for reform only part of the time, and against the revolution the whole time." (p. 7 of the Schweiker article.)

Again, let the reader judge! Has DB stated his opponent's views correctly? Or has he acted in the manner of those contemptible literary con-men and shysters who resort to any sophistry and fabrication, no matter how crude?

Page after page could be filled with similar comparisons, setting the Klonskyite allegations side by side with the originals. There is not one category in the Klonskyite laundry list of charges and insinuations that is not shot through with similar falsifications and hypocrisies. The whole standpoint of the Klonskyite attack is so false, so opportunist, that even in the exceptional case when they hit upon an actual error, it is more by accident than by design. What is characteristic of the whole campaign is -- as Lenin said of the "new" Iskra, when the opportunists took it over -- "its intrinsic dishonesty and falsehood, the attempt to evade the essence of the matter, the attempt to falsify Party opinion and judgement, to misrepresent concepts and facts." ("Note on the Position of the New Iskra," Vol. 7, p. 130.)

Unable to grasp and to stick to a principled line of conduct, and compelled, in desperation, to drop its own arguments and adopt those of its opponents in ideological struggle, the Klonsky circle covers itself with a barrage of the most contemptible sort of political fakery and character assassination. If you tell enough lies often enough, some of them will be believed -- this seems to be the Klonsky circle's motto. It is a principle fit for a fascist dictatorship.

Even today, when the Klonsky circle has comparatively little influence, its methods do considerable harm. It is not so much those whom the Klonsky circle selects as its targets who are harmed by them; in general, they are quite able to defend themselves, and with interest. It is the cause of Marxism-Leninism-Mao-Tsetung-Thought which is harmed. Thanks chiefly to the Klonsky method of "polemicizing," nothing that is asserted in The Call today retains any credibility. Not even the truths are believed. The Klonsky methods lower the credibility, respect and prestige that Marxism-Leninism-Mao-Tsetung Thought enjoys in the United States. That is the worst harm that could be done to our cause at the present time, and the best gift that the revisionists could receive.

--M.N.

WVO: Blinded

by Circle Vanity

The publication of M-L FORWARD No. 1, with its critique (among other points) of the Klonsky circle's capitulation to WVO on the "propaganda as chief form" question, brought a revealing squeal of self-congratulations from WVO.

Thumping its chest like King Kong, the Workers' Viewpoint paper of Jan. 1977 writes on this point:

"In fact, Nicholas is not far off in 'recognizing' that all opportunists will have to cop to WVO's line . . . The inevitable mutations of the opportunists toward the line of WVO is a testament to its strength" etc. etc.

Now, of course, it is quite true that opportunists change lines like chameleons, but since when does the dirt flatter itself when the chameleon sitting on it turns itself brown? Is this a "testament to the strength" of the dirt?

Since when do Marxist-Leninists pride themselves on the fact that "all the opportunists" are flocking to their line? Isn't this rather something to be ashamed of?

Yes, WVO; you are perhaps right! All the opportunists -- in fact, we may go so far as to say, especially and above everything the opportunists -- are drawn to the "strength" of your line. Yes, all the "Khrushchovs," all the "Mensheviks," all the "marsh" and the "mud" may eventually even "merge" with you. And if you want to boast about this, that is your business.

Apart from this amusing display of the blindness caused by runaway circle vanity, WVO's "polemic" on the publication of M-L FORWARD is marked by a careful avoidance of any of the substantive issues. As befits those who are proud of attracting opportunists . . .

...Red Papers 7

(Continued from Back Page)

political struggle. The question of whether a society is moving forward through socialism towards communism or whether capitalism has been restored is, in essence, a question of which class rules.... It is not, fundamentally, a question of which forms characterize the organization of the economy, the 'free' market, or some type of planning." Thus C.R. poses as the champion of "class struggle," of "politics" and of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and wishes to hang the label of "revisionism" on anyone who asserts that the forms of economic organization prevailing under the dictatorship of the proletariat (and those under the bourgeois dictatorship) are also fundamental questions, fundamental precisely to the political power of the class that rules.

What C.R.'s thesis does -- and C.R., as will be seen, applies it fairly consistently -- is to exclude the sphere of "forms of economic organization" from the sphere of "politics." In one breath he reminds us to "grasp class struggle as the key link," and in the next breath he negates this truth by asserting that the question of the economic foundation of society is not also a question of class struggle and of class dictatorship. "Politics," for C.R., is something that takes place everywhere else but in the base of society.

Thus C.R. takes the truth that "politics is the lifeblood of economic work" (Chairman Mao), and twists its meaning, making it appear as if politics existed outside economic work, as if economic work were void of political content. He drains the political lifeblood out of economic questions.

It requires only a brief survey of some high points of the class struggle under the dictatorship of the proletariat in China to expose the fallacy that the "forms of economic organization" are not "fundamental questions" for the progress or degeneration of the proletarian dictatorship.

Shortly after the founding of the People's Republic of China, a "philosopher" by the name of Yang Hsien-chen put forward the theory of the "synthesized economic base." He asserted that "In the period of transition the economic base of the state power of the socialist type" was of a "synthesized nature," "embracing both the socialist sector and the capitalist sector, and the sector of individual peasant economy as well." He argued, in other words, that the proletarian superstructure could also take the capitalist economy as its enduring foundation. He obliterated the diametrical antagonism and struggle between socialist economic forms and capitalist economic forms; and this denial was a way of opposing the establishment of a socialist economic base and of undermining the proletarian dictatorship. C.R.'s line has precisely the same political content.

'FOUR FREEDOMS'

Immediately following Yang came Yang's patron and mentor, Liu Shao-chi, with the slogan of the "four freedoms." These were "freedom" of land sale, of hiring labor, of usury, and of trading. He advocated, in other words, that the form of economic organization in which the means of production, labor power, money and products have the social form of commodities should be expanded and generalized throughout China.

According to C.R., the question of "whether a society is moving forward through socialism towards communism.... is not, fundamentally, a question of which forms characterize the organization of the economy, the 'free' market, or ... planning." In C.R.'s view, therefore, the Chinese proletariat should not have become fundamentally 'disturbed' by Liu Shao-chi's demands; they should have realized that this was 'merely' a question of forms of economic organization, and that what "really" counts is "politics," i.e., according to C.R., something separate from and different from "forms of economic organization."

Undoubtedly C.R. believes that those in China who rebelled against this program concerning the forms of economic organization were (as C.R. asserts on p. 32) "looking at capitalism not from the vantage point of the working class, ... but from the viewpoint of the 'alienated' petty bourgeois intellectual who is shocked and repelled by the 'vulgarity' of a society organized according to mercantile principles." Had they "understood," as C.R. does, that a "society organized according to mercantile principles" is something other than capitalist society, no doubt they would have "understood" that Liu Shao-chi was not trying to restore capitalism, he was "merely" proposing a change in the dominant "form of economic organization." This is what C.R.'s logic amounts to.

THE 'CAT FALLACY'

Or take the case of the "cat fallacy" -- "it doesn't matter whether a cat is black or white, so long as it catches mice." This was meant to say, it doesn't matter whether capitalist or socialist forms of economic organization are promoted, so long as production goes up. C.R. pretends to oppose this. But C.R.'s line is based on the same premise: it doesn't matter which forms of economic organization dominate. In place of the conclusion, so long as production goes up, C.R. puts the "political" conclusion, "so long as the proletariat stays in power." But the basic premise is the same, and it is this premise which is revisionist.

"Grasp Revolution, Promote Production." This is the correct guideline for strengthening the proletariat's power both in the superstructure and in the economic base. Class struggle is the key link on both fronts, not only on one of them.

All of C.R.'s talk about "restricting bourgeois right," (incidentally, there is not a word about bourgeois right in RP7), "narrowing the three great differences," and so forth, omits to add one rather central and vital point: "build the socialist economy, the base of the dictatorship of the proletariat." For C.R., the socialist economy has no positive content of its own; it exists merely as the partial absence of capitalism. Socialist economic organization, according to C.R., is merely capitalist organization restricted by the dictatorship of the proletariat; or, since that dictatorship is itself a restriction on capitalism, "socialism" in C.R.'s view may be defined simply this way: socialism is capitalism under proletarian rule. Or, even more concisely: socialism is any form of economic organization that exists under the proletarian dictatorship.

II. PROLETARIAN DICTATORSHIP AND THE ECONOMIC FOUNDATIONS IN NEP RUSSIA

In 1921, Lenin said, "Either we lay an economic foundation for the political gains of the Soviet state, or we shall lose them all."*

With this declaration, Lenin was pointing to the fact that a socialist economic foundation had only just begun to be laid. In fact, so devastated was Russia's economic life by imperialist intervention and civil war that a "direct assault" to build socialism was impossible. As Lenin repeated and reiterated on many occasions, because of these particular historical circumstances, "we must first set to work in this small-peasant country to build solid gangways to socialism by way of state capitalism. Otherwise we shall never get to communism."**

This "gangway" was the New Economic Policy (NEP), which began in 1921.

Lenin took pains to point out that this was not the ordinary state capitalism found in the economic textbooks. It was state capitalism under the proletarian dictatorship. At the same time he warned sharply against confusing the system with socialism, or concealing its capitalist character: "things would go very hard with us if we attempted to conceal it."

*"Second Congress of Political Education Departments" (Oct. 1921), Collected Works Vol. 33, p. 73.

**"Fourth Anniversary of the October Revolution," (Oct. 1921), CW 33, p. 58.

Summing up the political and economic situation, therefore, in 1918 and again in identical words in 1921, Lenin said: "Nor, I think, has any Communist denied that the term Socialist Soviet Republic implies the determination of Soviet power to achieve the transition to socialism, and not that the new economic system is recognized as a socialist order." And, in one of the last speeches of his life, Lenin emphasized the point again: "NEP Russia will become socialist Russia."

All these and other statements of Lenin's on the pre-socialist character of the predominant economic forms in Russia during the NEP period are cited with their specific page references in Restoration of Capitalism in the USSR, Chs. 2 and 3.

For C.R., all these are wasted words. To my earlier critique to the effect that RP7's view of socialist and capitalist forms of economy is so blurry that NEP Russia would have to be defined as mainly a socialist system, C.R. replies:

"Absolutely correct, sir! This was 'socialism' because the working class ruled." (p. 27)

And I have no doubt that C.R., staunch defender of his line that he is, would have stood up to Lenin himself, following Lenin's warnings that the "new economic system" was not to be recognized as a socialist order, and shouted back:

"Absolutely wrong, sir! It is socialism because the working class rules."

C.R. follows up this tasteless "polemical" sally by flinging down a sort of challenge to me: "Would Nicolaus like to make the key dividing line between socialist Russia and capitalist Russia the start of the first Five Year Plan and not the revolution of October, 1917 (as several bourgeois historians have tried to do before him)? Would he like to argue that state-capitalism (and not just its 'forms and techniques' as Lenin saw it) was the dominant system in the Soviet Union until it was overthrown, not by the masses in proletarian revolution, but by the plan?" (p. 27)

This question reveals once again that, in C.R.'s view, revolution by the masses is something counterposed to building the economic foundations of the proletarian dictatorship. However, I will accept the challenge.

SYSTEM 'IN TRANSITION'

After assessing the relative rates of growth or decline of the major economic forms existing in Russia in 1925, mainly the capitalist and the socialist, Stalin notes with satisfaction the very large and growing share of the latter. However, he adds:

"For all that, our system as a whole cannot yet be called either capitalist or socialist. Our system as a whole is transitional from capitalism to socialism."*

This characterization is exactly consistent with Lenin's definition of NEP as the transition from capitalism to socialism.

At the 16th Congress in 1930 Stalin announced, in view of the "increasing preponderance of the socialised sector over the non-socialised sector," that Soviet economy has entered "the last stage of NEP," the stage of the "victory of socialism over capitalism."**

Finally, in a report delivered in January 1933 on "The Results of the First Five-Year Plan," Stalin declares:

"The results of the five-year plan have shown that it is quite possible to build a socialist society in one country; for the economic foundations of such a society have already been laid in the U.S.S.R." A year later, in his report to the 17th Congress, Stalin passes in review the five different forms of social and economic structure that existed at the time NEP was introduced, traces their relative rise and fall, and declares:

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*"Fourteenth Congress of the CPSU(B)," Works, Vol. 7, p. 317; emphasis added.

**Works, Vol. 12, p. 315.

(Continued from previous page)

"...the fifth form -- the socialist form of social and economic structure -- now holds undivided sway and is the sole commanding force in the whole national economy. (Stormy and prolonged applause.)"*

STALIN A 'BOURGEOIS HISTORIAN'?

Of course, if we speak of the social order which the proletarian dictatorship aimed to achieve, then Russia was a socialist country from October 1917 on. There can be no quarrel on that score. But if we speak not of aims, but of the social order which actually existed as the dominant one, then NEP Russia indeed became socialist Russia at the time of the first Five-Year Plan. If C.R. considers this to be the line of "certain bourgeois historians" (which ones, by the way?), then C.R. will have to add to the catalogue of Stalin's other faults the charge that he was a bourgeois historian.**

Since, in C.R.'s view, any form of economic organization that exists under the proletarian dictatorship is socialism, it follows that the struggle under the proletarian dictatorship to overcome the bourgeois organization of economic life and to build up a collective, planned economy in its stead must appear to C.R. as a rather pointless exercise, lacking in "class," "political" significance. Let us therefore examine more closely C.R.'s view of economic planning.

III. ARE THE FORMS OF ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION 'CLASSLESS'?

For C.R., as we have seen, the progress or degeneration of the proletarian dictatorship "is not, fundamentally, a question of which forms characterize the organization of the economy, the 'free' market, or some type of planning." (p. 26) The question of "whether there is a plan or a market" is for C.R. "simply one of form." (p. 47). Consistent with this line of thinking, C.R. begins a sentence with the phrase: "Even where the socialist economy is mainly a planned economy..." (p. 26) -- clearly implying that there can be socialist economies in which planning does not predominate.

Such an assumption is an absurdity, an absurdity which flows directly from C.R.'s logic, however. The idea of a dictatorship of the proletariat which conducts political struggles in every other sphere, which exerts its leading role in every other sphere, but not in the sphere of economic organization -- this is peculiar indeed. Economic planning is nothing more than a form by which the proletariat exercises leadership in the field of economic organization; it is the proletarian dictatorship's instrument for conquering and as far as possible destroying the capitalist forms of economic organization, and of imposing its will instead of the will of the bourgeoisie on the country's economic life.

When Stalin put the first five-year plan on the agenda in the USSR, he also had to meet the objection, coming from a certain quarter, that the Party should not concern itself with the sphere of economic organization. He said:

"There was a time, comrades, two or three years ago, when a section of our comrades, headed by Trotsky, I think (...) rebuked our Gubernia Committees, our Regional Committees and our Central Committee, asserting that the Party organisations were not competent to interfere in the country's economic affairs and had no business to do so. Yes, there was such a time. Today, however, it is doubtful whether anybody would dare to cast such accusations at the Party organisations. That the Gubernia and Regional Committees have mastered the art of economic leadership, that the Party organisations are leading the work of economic construction and not trailing in its rear, is such a glaring fact that only the blind or imbecile would dare to deny it. The very

*Works, Vol. 13, pp. 219, 316.

**C.R.'s line on this point, not coincidentally, is the same as the Klonsky line expressed in the Klonsky "credo" and in The Call Nov. 30, and my reply to C.R. on this point can serve likewise as a reply to M.K. (See M-L FORWARD No. 1, "Marxism or Klonskyism?") Many of the Klonskyite points -- more than there is space to deal with here -- are either apparently directly cribbed from C.R.'s article, or represent an ESP-like "meeting of the minds."

fact that we have decided to put on the agenda of this congress the question of a five-year plan of development of the national economy, this very fact alone shows that the Party has made immense progress in the planned leadership of our work of economic construction...."

C.R.'s recipe of divorcing "politics" from "economic forms" under the dictatorship of the proletariat amounts to a "division of labor" between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The proletariat should command "political life," but the bourgeoisie should command the economy. Such a "division of labor" was precisely what Trotsky proposed at that time. It is nothing but a recipe whereby the bourgeoisie "destabilizes" the proletariat and overthrows it.

'PLANNING A CLASSLESS CONCEPT'

The nub of C.R.'s thinking on this particular question is laid out on the table on p. 28, where C.R. writes that "planning by itself is a classless concept."

I am grateful to C.R. for putting this thesis down on paper. It proves that all of C.R.'s phrases about "grasp class struggle as the key link" are for C.R. just phrases, and that he promptly "forgets" them every time it comes to a concrete question of economic organization.

C.R. takes refuge in the fact that capitalists also talk of and to a degree practice something they call "planning." "The capitalists plan every day. They plan to achieve the highest rate of profit for themselves. On the level of the single enterprise the capitalists plan production and sales to maximize the rate of profit. And on the state level the capitalists can also engage in planning, as in many countries in Western Europe. However, as RP7 points out, 'these plans are drawn up only to insure the profitability of major monopolized industries.'" (p. 28)

Yes. But many of these same Western European countries also talk of something they call "socialism." Moreover, there are the Eastern European countries, which talk not only of "planning" and "socialism" but also of "Marxism-Leninism." Are we therefore to conclude that this really is planning, really is socialism and Marxism-Leninism, and that these too, like "planning," are "classless concepts"?

This is rubbish which has nothing in common with the Marxist presentation of the question of planning. As for C.R.'s point that capitalist "plans" (or plans) are "drawn up only to insure the profitability of major monopolized industries," this is true so far as it goes, but the workers can hear this sort of "revelation" equally well from Ralph Nader and other petty-bourgeois reformists. The Marxist analysis of planning only begins with this ABC, it does not rest there.

In the first place, the fact that the capitalist monopolies and their states are increasingly resorting to a more "planned" exploitation of the workers "should serve the genuine representatives of the proletariat as an argument proving the proximity, facility, feasibility and urgency of the socialist revolution," as Lenin pointed out already in State and Revolution. C.R.'s thesis that "planning is classless" wipes out any spark of such an argument in one stroke.

Secondly, and even more importantly in the present dispute, the Marxist presentation of the question also emphasizes the impossibility of a planned economy under capitalism. No matter how concentrated and centralized, capitalist economy always remains dominated by the anarchy of production, and no efforts at planning can fundamentally alter this.

As Lenin points out also in State and Revolution, "the trusts, of course, never produced, do not now produce, and cannot produce complete planning."

Most particularly, the monopolistic organization of industry and banking, which is always the foundation of capitalist "planning," cannot abolish economic crises.

It is tiresome to have to cite one quotation after another, but when C.R. asserts such nonsense as "classless planning" in the guise of "Marxism," there is no choice.

*Works, Vol. 10, p. 334

"The statement that cartels can abolish crises is a fable spread by bourgeois economists who at all costs desire to place capitalism in a favorable light," points out Lenin in Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism. He continues: "On the contrary, the monopoly created in certain branches of industry increases and intensifies the anarchy inherent in capitalist production as a whole."

In other words, the more that capitalism develops to the degree of concentration where planning appears technically feasible, the more feverish does the force of economic anarchy become, which continually tears the capitalists' best-laid plans to shreds.

As A. Leontiev correctly summed up in his Political Economy, A Beginner's Text-book, "Imperialism does not eliminate, but on the contrary, strengthens and sharpens all the fundamental contradictions in the capitalist system. Anarchy of production not only does not disappear, but, on the contrary, assumes gigantic proportions and gives rise to particularly devastating consequences." (pp. 223)

It is for these reasons that Stalin rightly treated with scorn any assertions that a planned economy could be achieved as well by the bourgeoisie as by the proletariat. He observed:

"Reference is sometimes made to American and German economic bodies which, it is alleged, also direct their national economy in a planned way. No, comrades, those countries have not yet achieved this, and never will achieve it, as long as the capitalist system exists there. To be able to lead in a planned way it is necessary to have a different system of industry, a socialist and not a capitalist system....

"True, they also have something in the nature of plans; but these are forecast plans, guess-work plans, not binding on anybody, and they cannot serve as a basis for directing the country's economy. Things are different in our country. Our plans are not forecast plans, not guess-work plans, but directive plans, which are binding upon our leading bodies, and which determine the trend of our future economic development on a country-wide scale.

"You see, we have a fundamental difference here."*

C.R.'s notion of "classless planning" completely glosses over this fundamental difference. If "planning is classless," then there is no reason why a capitalist economy cannot be a planned economy just as much as a socialist one.

MYTH OF 'PLANNED CAPITALISM'

The idea of a "planned capitalism" was in fact (and remains) a favorite theme of the treacherous Social-Democratic "theoreticians," who, in Leontiev's words

"...try to maintain that with the growth of monopoly there is an end to the blind forces of the market. Capitalism supposedly organizes itself, competition disappears, anarchy of production is eliminated, crises become things of the past, planned, conscious organization predominates.... The theory of organized capitalism is a further development of Kautsky's theory of ultra-imperialism." (p. 223)

Precisely such a Social-Democratic fable is what C.R. dishes out not only when he dignifies "many countries of Western Europe" as planned economies, but even more so, when he describes the USSR today.

To be sure, C.R. throws in a couple of figleaf phrases about "anarchy of production" to cover himself. His main thesis, however, is that "there still is a single state 'plan'" in the USSR today (p. 36); the Soviet economy "is a state-monopoly capitalist economy in which there is a unified and directed state plan" (p. 40, my emphasis); it is "run according to a plan" (p. 46) and (yes, Virginia) "there really is a plan in the Soviet Union." (p. 48, my emphases). Remark that C.R. uses "planning" with or without quotation marks.

In short, when I pointed out in my earlier critique that the image of the USSR

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*Works, Vol. 10, pp. 334-35.

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painted by RP7 resembled Kautsky's myth of "ultra-imperialism," I was precisely correct. It is the resurrection and further development of that myth; it is the Social-Democratic fantasy of "organized capitalism."

SOVIET 'ORDER' UNSTABLE

What C.R. glosses over is the contradictions and antagonisms within the structure of Soviet capitalism. The well-known fact that Soviet state-monopoly capitalism is more highly concentrated and centralized than any other in the world today also means that a more feverish anarchy, a more intense disorder is packed into a more compact, dense and hence more volatile, unstable, explosive mass than elsewhere.

We must ask C.R.: if Soviet capitalism is able to achieve such a degree of "organization" that it can be "run according to a unified and directed state plan," why cannot U.S. capitalism be run in the same way? If the Social-Democratic myth of "planned capitalism" has come true for the USSR, what prevents it from coming true for the U.S.A.?

In reality, Soviet economic "planning" today -- with the possible but by no means definite exception of the directly military sector -- plays just as much the role of rearguard to the march of anarchy as it does in the Western European countries. I have presented my research findings on this score in the body of Chs. 18-20 of Restoration of Capitalism in the USSR, with supplementary evidence in the other chapters. These data, taken from Soviet sources themselves, especially from the Soviet "planners," demonstrate that the USSR today is not an economy dominated by planning but by the anarchy of production. It could not be otherwise in a capitalist economy.

C.R., who displays an aristocratic aloofness on the question whether economic life under the proletarian dictatorship is or is not organized in a planned way, nevertheless considers it a cardinal question touching the honor of RP7 and of the RCP to "prove" that the capitalist economy under the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie in the USSR today is a "planned economy." I suggest, firstly, that C.R. is using the Soviet Union as a screen onto which to project in slightly disguised form his revisionist, Kautskyite illusions about an "organized capitalism"; and secondly, that C.R. and the RCP will be wasting their (and our) time in trying to "prove" this thesis. There is already enough Soviet social-imperialist, CPUSA revisionist, Trotskyite and other bourgeois propaganda about Soviet "planning" today, and we do not need the RCP to regurgitate it for us.

STALIN'S LAST HEARTBEAT

Just as C.R. would like to date the establishment of the socialist social order in the USSR from October 1917, so his logic leads him in the direction of dating the re-establishment of the capitalist social order (as the dominant system) from the moment of Stalin's last heartbeat, in 1953, if not earlier. The Klonsky circle's thinking has drifted in the same direction. This question of when the full restoration of the capitalist system occurred is so filled with implications which both C.R. and the Klonsky circle blissfully ignore, that it deserves to be treated separately at another time. In my own view, which is laid out in Restoration, the Soviet system during the Khrushchov years (1956-64) had a transitional character, much as did NEP Russia, but "upside down" and "backward." The bourgeoisie (arising on the soil of bourgeois right under socialism) had seized state power, and was using its control of the superstructure to restore capitalism. It fully succeeded at this task -- that is, capitalism was fully restored -- with the "new economic system" measures of 1965.

IV. DOES THE SOVIET STATE STAND ABOVE ALL CLASSES?

But doesn't this mean that the USSR would have had to be a state of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, one of the fascist type, before the full restoration of capitalism? Yes; that is so. The superstructure played the "leading" role in the restoration, moving in advance of the consolidation of the economic base along capitalist lines. To point out that the superstructure can play the principal and leading role, and the economic base can follow behind -- during the particular and peculiar conditions of

the transition period-- is not contrary to materialism.*

It is quite another thing, however, to assert that this situation did not evolve and become transformed into its opposite, but that the superstructure of Soviet capitalism continues today to determine its economic foundation, and that this state of affairs has become a permanent feature of the Soviet social structure.

While not denying in any conditions the reaction of the superstructure on the base, Marxist analysis holds that, in general, it is the base that determines the superstructure. Thus, for example, Marxist analysis shows that the bourgeois political parties and bourgeois states act in the way they do (i.e. they repress the working class and the nationalities, they conduct wars, etc.) not because they "prefer" it but because it is dictated to them by the interests of their class, and these interests are in turn determined by the place of their class in the system of production. Thus Marxism explains, for example, imperialist war not as the product of the "character" or "mentality" of the politicians in power, but as a result of the basic structure of monopoly capitalism, its built-in expansive drives, etc. Marxism analyzes the imperialist state, therefore, not as something that "stands above" the imperialist monopolies and "commands" them, but just the opposite, as the servant and instrument of these monopolies, which is commanded by them.

According to RP7, however, the system that was established in the USSR with the restoration of capitalism is quite different from this. Unlike all other capitalist countries, in which the bourgeois parties and the state bureaucracy are subordinated to the monopoly corporations, in the USSR allegedly the reverse is true: the monopoly corporations are "subordinated" to the political interests of the state bureaucracy which is "run" by a political party. (RP7, p. 51). This allegation dovetails with C.R.'s idea of the Soviet economy being "controlled" by a "single, unified, directed state plan." Thus, instead of the political apparatus serving the capitalist monopolies, as in every other capitalist country, in the USSR the capitalist monopolies allegedly serve the political apparatus. So thinks C.R.

REVISIONISM ON THE STATE

What does this idea mean? It means that the Soviet political apparatus, the state, stands not only above the people in general (the working class and peasantry), it also stands above the capitalist monopolies. It is a political apparatus which, unlike any other in the world, allegedly stands above all classes, and subordinates all classes to itself.

What is this notion? It is nothing but revisionism on the question of the state; it is nothing but a disguised echo of the Brezhnev propaganda machine which claims that it, too, "governs" the Soviet trusts and combines rather than being the servant and instrument of these capitalist monsters. Having swallowed the myth of "classless planning" and echoed the fable of "planned capitalism," C.R. is compelled likewise to parrot the essentials of revisionist propaganda about a "classless state."

The fact that in the USSR the capitalist monopolies appear in the form of state monopolies, so that economic and political power both display the "state" label, must not be used as a cover for smuggling in revisionism on the state. As Stalin noted in Economic Problems of Socialism, the so-called "coalescence of the monopolies with the state machine" which makes up state-monopoly capitalism is in reality "the subjugation of the state machine to the monopolies."**

Just such a subjugation of the political apparatus to the capitalist monopolies is what took place in the restoration process in the USSR; the reader will find it described in Chs. 18-22 of Restoration.

What is asserted in RP7 and by C.R., in contrast, is a Kautskyite myth which, if C.R. dared to follow it through consistent-

*See Mao Tsetung, "On Contradiction," Selected Works Vol. I, pp. 335-336.

**Economic Problems of Socialism, FLP, p. 43.

ly, leads to the conclusion that imperialism is a policy preferred by Brezhnev and a few cohorts, which they compel the Soviet capitalist monopolies to pursue whether they like it or not. Remove this handful of politicians, and the driving force behind imperialism disappears. Nonsense! Brezhnev and his cohorts are imperialist politicians because they are the servants of the monopoly-capitalist economic organization, which they themselves brought into life and promoted.

Again, a question to C.R.: if it is possible in the USSR for a bourgeois political party to subordinate the capitalist monopolies to itself, and to keep them there, why is it not possible in any other capitalist country?

IMPERIALIST APOLOGETICS

The worst of it is that C.R., like RP7, imagines that Nazi Germany was the model of such a supra-class party and state. "Under the Nazis all sections of German imperialism were subordinated to the state bureaucracy run by the Nazi party. In return for abandoning a certain amount of 'independence,' the big corporations were rewarded in a number of ways.... The economy, of course, remained thoroughly capitalist but the state played the leading role." (p. 51, RP7) And this is what C.R. imagines is the situation in the USSR.

This picture of German fascism, however, is a fake, as I pointed out already in my earlier critique. It is drawn from the writings of the bourgeois, liberal British writer Tim Mason; and Mason, in turn, consciously or not, drew it from the self-defense speeches made by the Krupps and Thyssens and the heads of the I.G. Farben trust at the Nuremberg war crimes trials. All these financial oligarchs claimed that they and their banks and corporations had had nothing to do with fascism and the war, but that the Nazi party had "forced" them to participate, that "all sections of German imperialism" had been "subordinate" to this bunch of fascist politicians.

What is C.R.'s reply? Not a word about the substance of my argument, only a blanket defense of RP7 and of "poor Tim Mason," whose work C.R. calls "illuminating" (p. 39) -- and, on top of it, a broadside attack on Dimitrov's definition of fascism. Now, we may well disagree about the strategy of a United Front Against Fascism, and we may argue about one or another secondary aspect of Dimitrov's definition (e.g. is fascism backed only by one sector of monopoly capital or by all sectors unanimously) -- but when we deny that fascism is a form of dictatorship by monopoly capital, and instead assert that fascism is a kind of dictatorship over monopoly capital, then we are leaving the ground of anything that can even loosely be called "Marxism;" we are on the ground of blatant bourgeois apologetics. The Nazis themselves, in their everyday propaganda, presented their party and the state in precisely this light, in order to conceal from the masses that they were the lackeys of finance capital.

Shame on C.R. for conducting this kind of a "defense" of RP7!

A FINAL WORD

As for the other points that C.R.'s polemic raises, it is not worth the space and time to answer them here. Most of them are covered in Restoration. Instead, a few words in summary and conclusion.

(1) C.R.'s ideas on one question after another are variations on the basic theme of Economism, a form of revisionism that sets up a wall between the everyday working world of the working class, the material foundation of society, on the one hand, and the world of "politics," particularly Marxist politics, on the other hand.

(2) This metaphysical separation leads inevitably to a revisionist line on both "economics" and "politics," both the economic foundation and the state. In both ways it liquidates the proletarian dictatorship.

(3) The "Party" label is not a magic wand which can erase or rectify the weaknesses in a piece of political literature. By conducting his defense of the revisionist streak in RP7 under the "Party" banner, C.R. has only engaged his whole party in an even more open and broadside attack against the fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism.

Once more on Red Papers 7**HOW THE RCP HAS RESTORED SOCIAL-DEMOCRACY**

By M. Nicolaus

The thesis that capitalism has been restored in the Soviet Union is one of the key points on which all trends in our movement are agreed. Nevertheless, there is ideological struggle over the hows and the whys of this restoration; and this is a reflection and continuation of the general ideological struggle between Marxism-Leninism and opportunism within our movement.

Red Papers 7 ("How Capitalism Has Been Restored in the Soviet Union and What This Means for the World Struggle"), published by the RU in October 1974, is one of the very few texts produced by the U.S. movement that attempts to go at all deeply into this question.* As I wrote in a review of this text ("Metaphysics Cannot Defeat Revisionism," in *Class Struggle* No. 2) published in the summer of 1975, it contains considerable useful material for the exposure of the new tsars in the USSR, and makes a contribution from that point of view; but the theoretical framework which attempts to tie the material together, and to give a concept of the Soviet system today as a whole, is shot through with metaphysics. Important differences between socialist and capitalist forms of production are blurred

*The Klonsky circle's recent decision to stop distribution of *Restoration of Capitalism in the USSR* (Liberator Press, 1975) -- after more than 10,000 copies had been sold -- now leaves the RCP's Red Papers 7 a virtual monopoly in the field of home-grown literature on this topic. Comrade Avakian is very grateful to you for this, comrade Klonsky. (And so is Mr. Silber of the *Guardian*!)

over, social relationships (such as capital) are arbitrarily confused with material things (e.g. machinery) on the one hand, and equally arbitrarily divorced from "politics" on the other hand; with the result that the exposition creates enormous confusion, and reveals considerable room for doubt whether capitalism has, in fact, actually been restored.

POLEMICS REOPENED

There the open polemics rested for a year and a half. Now the RU, which has meanwhile become the RCP, has reopened them, in the form of an article by an author signing himself or herself "C.R.," in No. 1 of the RCP's theoretical journal *The Communist*, dated October 1976. The chief task which C.R. undertakes is to defend RP7 against my critical review.

This defense is of more than ordinary interest inasmuch as C.R. conducts it under the "Party" banner. As C.R. declares at the outset, RP7 in Oct. 1975 became an official publication of the RCP; and hence, according to C.R., the defense of this identical text (apart from one typographical error) is now a high and bounden "Party" duty.

A small illustration, trivial in itself, nicely illustrates the spirit in which this defense is conducted. The authors of RP7 had the frankness to admit, at one point, that "at times this account has been necessarily quite complicated ... and some readers may have found parts a bit confusing." (p. 53) C.R. asserts, by contrast, that "Nicolaus is the only reader of RP7 to have been confused." (p. 40) In short, the same exposition which admittedly had

its shortcomings when it was pre-party literature, a circle text, has now allegedly become a model of clarity, by virtue of having had the "Party" flag draped over it. The transformation of circle work into party work signifies for C.R. not that the shortcomings in the work must be recognized and rectified with all the greater urgency, but just the contrary, that they must be covered up. Circle "vices" become party "virtues" -- this is C.R.'s unspoken motto; and of course C.R. is not alone in operating by this rule.

What C.R. accomplishes, with his defense of the weak strains in RP7, is to bring these points even more obviously and glaringly to the surface, and to tie them together into a consistent theme. This theme is the arbitrary separation of "economics" -- questions of the forms of economic organization, of the economic foundation of society -- from "politics," i.e. questions of the superstructure, the state. The practical results of this arbitrary separation can be seen in the RCP's policy of publishing organs with little or no Marxist political content for the working class (the "Worker" papers), and a separate "political" organ for the intelligentsia, for example. C.R.'s article reveals the variations to which this Economist separation gives rise on the theoretical level, as applied to problems of history and political economy on a large canvas.

I. THE PROLETARIAN DICTATORSHIP AND ITS ECONOMIC FOUNDATION

C.R.'s principal argument is that the class struggle under the dictatorship of the proletariat "is most fundamentally a

(Continued on page 21)

EDITORIAL ...THEIR PESSIMISM, OUR AGITATION

(Continued from Front Page)

In short, a transition appears to be taking place. The dominant position of the "propaganda as chief form of activity" line is being eroded. Whether it is at this moment still the dominant line is in question.

The new consensus -- and due to the fragmented nature of the movement, we are still unfortunately at the stage of "consensus" among the Marxist-Leninists, rather than of democratic-centralist policy decision -- has not yet crystallized. Non-controversial formulas about the necessity to have "more and better" agitation and propaganda (when is this not desirable?) are coming into season, possibly reflecting a desire to bury this struggle, and move on. So long as the sham "Left," narrow, parochial and primitivist "propaganda" line is the chief object of this burial, and insofar as Leninist political agitation is the chief beneficiary, the conclusion of the drawn-out struggle over agitation and propaganda will be a good thing. Propaganda too will benefit.

The defeat of the narrow "propaganda" line and the ascendancy of political agitation will have a salutary effect on the struggle for principled Marxist-Leninist unity. Not that the achievement of any agreement on the question of form of activity can by itself overcome the differences about the political contents in this form. On the contrary. The main reason why the "propaganda" line must be defeated is that it has proved itself not only incapable of defeating the Right opportunist deviation, which is historically the chief and fundamental danger, but has actually aided that trend and hamstrung the struggle against it. The removal of the so-called "propagandists" from the scene -- their practical and theoretical rout -- will merely clear the decks for new battles among the "agitators," particularly

between the "economists" and the "politicians," and, no doubt, among the latter. The defeat of "propagandism" is the necessary condition to defeat Economism.

What the trend toward Leninist political agitation as a form of activity can contribute to the unity struggle, however, is an enhanced appreciation of the necessity for unity, and hence a stronger desire for it. Propaganda as a form of activity can be carried out more or less adequately by comparatively small circles and even by individuals; but it is practically impossible to go very far in political agitation -- particularly if the cornerstone of this agitation is the dictatorship of the proletariat -- without a nationwide, united, democratic-centralist party. The turn toward political agitation will add to the bland desire for principled unity the tabasco sauce of practical urgency. The sincere desire for unity, in turn, is a key ingredient in actually achieving it.

The final verdict on the question of chief form of activity, however, will be rendered by the masses. In a 600-page report by a government "Task Force on Disorders and Terrorism," released just as we go to press, it is said that today's "general orderliness" (?) in U.S. society is "a false calm, and we must see in the current social situation an accumulation of trouble for the future."

Perhaps the authors of the report, paid for by a grant from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA), are open to the accusation of dramatizing matters in a plea for ever-larger police budgets. Perhaps. But the facts and arguments which these police thinkers marshal to reinforce their conclusion have a ring of undeniable truth. The government, says the report, "has done little to correct the underlying causes of the disorders" of the 1960s and early 70s; "unemployment has risen markedly and job opportunities

for the disadvantaged have dwindled"; and "the state of the great cities is more desperate than it was during the most serious riots of the 1960s."

Therefore, concludes the report, "there will surely come a time when once again socioeconomic conditions will generate violent reactions." This is the gospel truth, no matter who says it. But will the inevitable "violent reactions" by the masses be impelled only by "socioeconomic conditions," by spontaneity? Or will the Marxist-Leninists emerge at their head, to imbue them with revolutionary consciousness, organization, and planful purpose? Will Mr. Brzezinsky's class survive his premonitions of its doom in a decade, or will they be fulfilled? This all depends, essentially, on the speed and effectiveness with which a single, unified Marxist-Leninist Party of the proletariat, guided by Marxism-Leninism-Mao-Tsetung Thought and experienced at political agitation for the dictatorship of the proletariat, can be set on its feet in this country.

* * * * *

Our thanks to all the readers of M-L FORWARD in the U.S. and abroad who have written to tell of their support and their interest, especially to those who have sent subscriptions and contributions.

This issue has been delayed by a month -- it was to have come out in early February -- chiefly to allow more time for No. 1 to reach its audience via the bookstores. Distribution in the West and Midwest has been better than expected, but is still practically nonexistent in the East Coast. Assistance from readers in placing No. 1 with East Coast outlets would be much appreciated. The articles on other topics announced in No. 1 are held over for No. 3, along with letters. Inquiries from comrades wishing to help in its publication and production are welcome.

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