

WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!

The Workers' Advocate Supplement



50¢

Vol. 3 #11

VOICE OF THE MARXIST-LENINIST PARTY, USA

Nov. 10, 1987

Arias pact in action — amnesty for Salvadoran death squads

The Arias pact is full of big words about peace and elections and democratization. But for the workers and peasants in El Salvador and Guatemala, all these words are meaningless so long as death-squad regimes rule. And, as it turns out, the Arias pact is designed to stabilize and perpetuate these regimes. It does nothing to solve the question of the death squads.

No Letup in the Death Squads

Take a look at El Salvador. President Duarte is

one of the big backers of the Arias pact. But while he postures as a friend of democracy, the murders continue. Duarte talks of a negotiated settlement, but the work of the death squads is the real negotiations. Just a few days ago, on Monday, October 27, Herbert Anaya Sanabria, president of the Commission on Human Rights (which is not a part of the government) was murdered by the death squads. As he left his home to drive his children to school, he was shot in the back and in the head at point-blank range by two men using

Continued on page 2

Some facts about the Marxist-Leninist Party of Nicaragua (MAP-ML)

In the U.S. the bourgeois press writes volumes about the murderous contras. We also hear about the Nicaraguan right wing like La Prensa and Cardinal Obando y Bravo. And there's news about the Sandinistas (FSLN) and the Sandinista government. But there is a deathly silence about the party of the class-conscious workers, the Marxist-Leninist Party of Nicaragua (MLPN). To fill this void we are carrying below a brief account of the MLPN, its role in the revolution against Somoza, and the struggle it is waging today.

A Workers' Party Born in the Struggle Against Somoza

The formation of the MLPN. The Popular Action Movement/Marxist-Leninist (MAP/ML) was founded in 1971. (At a national conference in mid-1985 it officially changed its name to the MLPN.) It was formed by workers and revolutionary militants who rejected the reformism of the pro-Soviet revisionists of the Socialist Party.

(Today the SP, and also the Communist Party, which like the SP is a pro-Soviet revisionist party, are so corrupted that they remain linked to their old wealthy, liberal friends of yesterday in the present-day right-wing opposition to the FSLN.) The MLPN also rejected the Castroite focoist guerrilla tendency -- of abstaining from organizing the

Continued on page 3

INSIDE

Correspondence:

Ann Arbor activist for the Arias plan 6
Texas prisoner against the Arias plan 8

On the literary debate:

New developments 10
In defense of revolutionary literature:
A reply to the draft letter 12
Draft letter on Struggle 19

**THE ARIAS PACT IN ACTION --
AMNESTY FOR THE SALVADORAN DEATH-SQUADS**

Continued from the front page

semi-automatic pistols with silencers.

Herbert Anaya was the seventh member of the Commission on Human Rights to be murdered in so many years. Duarte's police had arrested Anaya on May 26 last year on suspicion of secretly collaborating with the insurgent workers and peasants. He was held without trial, but freed later in the year along with 56 other political prisoners in exchange for an army colonel captured by the Salvadoran revolutionary movement. Under the Arias plan, some other left-wing prisoners may be released. But will it just single them out for bullets like Anaya?

The People Object

The Salvadoran people were outraged by this new murder. Eight hundred political prisoners took over the headquarters of Mariona prison, the main prison in the country. Students and labor

unions protested in the capital city of San Salvador, with 3,500 people taking to the streets. Meanwhile the leadership of the insurgent movement temporarily broke off talks with the Duarte government.

Duarte Amnesties the Death Squads

Meanwhile President Duarte played his usual two-faced role. On the one hand, his government expressed official regret at the murder of Anaya (whom they had arrested the previous year). On the other hand, it moved to amnesty all death squad crimes committed before October 23 (except for the murder of Archbishop Romero), thus helping encourage future murders. This, in effect, is Duarte's answer to the group "Mothers of the Disappeared," which has urged the government to prosecute the death-squad murderers.

This amnesty was done under the framework of the Arias pact. This pact calls for an amnesty in El Salvador, and it presents this as a stand in favor of the people. But Duarte turned this into an amnesty for the death squads, and there has not been a peep of protest from Arias.

At the same time, the amnesty excluded as much of the revolutionary movement as possible. For example, the amnesty does not apply to "kidnapping," so it doesn't apply to the insurgents who kidnapped a colonel to free Anaya last year. It is said that nevertheless several hundred insurgents will be released under the amnesty. But the law is opposed by the insurgent people, who will not consent to forget the crimes of the death squads. Nor do they view it as a great privilege to replace prison cells with coffins.

The U.S. Helps Train the Murderers

Meanwhile Reagan and Congress are sending in more funds to train the Salvadoran police. There is yet another \$7.4 million "aid" package to bolster the police. This will help make the murders more efficient. This is being presented by Washington in "human rights" colors: it is supposed to turn the police into a counterweight for the army, allegedly the only source of the death squads. But the Salvadoran people are mad -- they can't see the virtue in being murdered by a police thug rather than a military one. And, of course, the U.S. government is also the main source of money and training for the army as well.

**The
Workers' Advocate** 

**Theoretical-Political Newspaper of the
Central Committee of the
Marxist-Leninist Party, USA**

Rates: 75¢ for single copy; \$4.50 for 6 issues; \$9 for 12 issues by 1st class mail (U.S., Canada, Mexico).
From distributor: 25¢ ISSN 0276-363X

**The Workers' Advocate
Supplement** 

Rates: \$1 for single copy; \$12 for one year by 1st class mail (U.S., Canada, Mexico).
From distributor: 50¢ ISSN 0882-6366

LETTERS: The Workers' Advocate or The Supplement
P.O. Box 11942 Ontario St. Stn. Chicago, IL 60611

ORDERS: Marxist-Leninist Publications
P.O. Box 11972 Ontario St. Stn. Chicago, IL 60611

Here too there was no protest from Arias. The U.S. trains the police and army of the death squad regimes, and Arias sees no violation of democratization in all this.

Duarte Backs Up the Reagan Administration

Can this same Duarte, whose hands are red with the blood of the Salvadoran people and whose government lives on American money, be an opponent of Reagan's policy in Central America? That is what it would mean if the Arias pact really meant defiance of the U.S.

Duarte himself has done his best to dispel any such illusion. He visited Washington for three days in mid-October. According to the New York

Times, he "worked hard to demonstrate support for the Reagan administration's posture on the peace plan. He has repeatedly criticized the Nicaraguan government..." (October 16) Although the Arias pact is supposed to require the Central American governments to politely ask the U.S. to stop funding the contras, Duarte stated that "I don't want to take any part in the internal affairs of the United States. I will not make any statement on contra aid."

For that matter, El Salvador continues to be one of the bases for U.S. aggression against Nicaragua. Hasenfus took off from Ilopango air force base on his run to drop arms into Nicaragua, and the CIA and the Pentagon still maintain this and other Salvadoran bases. <>

SOME FACTS ABOUT THE MARXIST-LENINIST PARTY OF NICARAGUA (MAP/ML)

Continued from the front page

masses and their struggles -- and the social-democratic tendency. Both the Castroite focist and the social-democratic trends were combined in the policies of the Sandinista Front. In practice both the revisionists and the FSLN left the masses at the mercy of the bourgeois liberals.

The MLPN took up the task of organizing the workers and peasants as an independent force for the overthrow of the hated dictator Somoza and the exploiting classes. It worked to build the class-conscious vanguard of the proletariat, the Marxist-Leninist Party, in the midst of the mass struggles that were unfolding at that time.

The 1973 construction strike. In 1973, some 20,000 construction workers struck for over a month against Somoza's decree imposing a 60-hour work week. The official leaders of the union tried to cut the strike short, before the workers won their demands. But the MLPN led the workers to defy the union officials and carry through their struggle. As a result they were able to win the 48-hour week for all construction workers.

The formation of the Workers Front (Frente Obrero). In 1974-75 the MLPN formed its own

revolutionary trade union center named Frente Obrero (FO).

On the barricades of the insurrection. In September, 1978 the MLPN forged the Popular Anti-Somoza Militias (MILPAS). The MILPAS were the second army of the 1978-79 liberation war. Apart from the FSLN, the MILPAS were the only other organized armed force fighting against Somoza. By the time of the insurrection the MILPAS had some 7,000 workers, poor peasants, and barrio youth under arms.

The daily El Pueblo. In March 1979, the MLPN launched the daily newspaper El Pueblo. It gained a circulation of about 10,000 copies (large by Managua standards) and became the workers' voice in the revolution.

After the Overthrow of Somoza, An Upsurge of the Workers and Peasants

In the revolutionary upsurge. After the victory over Somoza a wave of strikes, land seizures, and a workers' control movement against the big capitalists and landlords swept across Nicaragua. The MLPN and FO plunged into these struggles, organizing sugar combine workers, construction

workers and other key sectors of the working class.

The repression in 1979-80. Afraid of upsetting the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie, the new Sandinista-bourgeoisie coalition government cracked down hard on this upsurge of the working masses. The MLPN and FO bore the brunt of the repression.

In 1979-80 El Pueblo was suppressed and its printing presses were confiscated. Over 100 MLPN and FO militants were jailed, many for months. And through bureaucratic dictate, mass firings of FO sympathizers, and sometimes through the dispatch of the army to take over the work place, FO unions were dismantled. In the main the Sandinista CST unions replaced them.

Although there were protests, the prestige that the Sandinistas had gained among the masses from being the dominant party of the revolution allowed them to get away with the repression.

Today the Class Struggle Deepens

The MLPN rebounds. Today the masses are becoming increasingly disillusioned with the Sandinista government and the class struggle is mounting. The working class and the peasants have made enormous sacrifices in the face of the CIA-contra war, the imperialist economic blockade, and the dire economic crisis. But instead of relying on the masses and mobilizing them to make the Nicaraguan capitalists and landlords pay for the crisis, the Sandinista government keeps granting more economic concessions and political space to the rich reactionaries. At the same time, La Prensa and the right-wing parties are trying to use the mass disillusionment with the government for their own ends, to strengthen counterrevolution.

The MLPN is working to organize the workers and poor peasants as an independent revolutionary force to block the counterrevolution, to combat the Sandinista attempts to negotiate away the gains of the revolution, and to deepen the revolution towards socialism. Step by step the MLPN has been recovering its strength.

Elected to the National Assembly in 1984. In the 1984 elections MLPN gained two seats in the National Assembly. It ran openly on a platform for the proletarian revolution and socialism in Nicaragua.

Rebuilding the workers' press. The MLPN works hard to reestablish the workers' press. It puts out a monthly newspaper, Prensa Proletaria. Its voice is also heard daily on an hour-long radio news program and weekly on a longer radio program dealing with cultural matters. It is also

demanding that the Sandinistas allow the reopening of El Pueblo and return its printing press. The MLPN demands more freedom of the press for the workers, not the wealthy capitalists and landlords.

In the military defense of Nicaragua. Although the MILPAS were disbanded after the insurrection, the MLPN still takes an active part in the military defense of the country. MLPN militants enter the Sandinista army and some have died on the war fronts. The MLPN also works to help build up peasant militias in the war fronts and to combat the demobilization by the Sandinistas of the workers' militias in the cities.

The MLPN argues that military defense is not just a military question, but also a political question; it is a question of mobilizing the masses to deepen the revolution. Therefore, MLPN militants carry out revolutionary agitation and organizational work among the soldiers in the Sandinista army as well as among the workers and peasants in the work places and fields.

Frente Obrero trade union center rebuilds. The June issue of Barricada Internacional, the Sandinista newspaper, put the organized strength of the FO trade union center at over 5,000 workers. This makes it officially the third largest trade union center after the Sandinistas' CST and the Socialist Party's CGTI.

But this figure does not give a true picture of the strength of the FO. The MLPN works among the masses inside other unions, and there are work places which are officially affiliated to the CST but whose workers support FO. Because of the severe bureaucratic manipulation by the Sandinistas of official trade union affairs, the MLPN does not put much weight today on contesting the elections to the union leadership. Instead, it emphasizes building up influence among the base of the workers through rank-and-file "committees of struggle" with the line of defending the class interests of the workers within the revolution. Some examples of their work include:

METASA: This is the largest metallurgical combine in Nicaragua, situated in Tipitapa just outside Managua. It was previously owned by Somoza, but now is state operated and employs 700 workers. In 1984 the workers struck. The strike didn't win its objectives, but it was important in opening the workers' eyes to the problems of Sandinism. Since that time, the union follows an independent policy despite being affiliated with the Sandinista CST.

A slate sympathetic to the FO won the 1986 union elections. It began the first shop paper at METASA, called Boletin El Metalurgica, which has

been passed around to all other metal works in the country. In 1987 the Sandinistas manipulated the elections to allow an FSLN slate to win. FO maintains its broad influence among the workers.

San Antonio sugar combine: In Chichigalpa, Chinandega, this is the largest sugar plantation-refinery complex in Central America. It is owned by the Pellas family, who are very rich and live in Miami. The Pellas are absentee capitalists; they have their profits wired to them. The management is appointed by the Sandinista government.

Last December, FO militants led a five-day wildcat strike of thousands of workers at the San Antonio Refinery. The immediate issue was the management's attempt to close the employee commissary which is vital for the workers' livelihood.

Earlier, FO militants led a struggle for equal pay for equal work for the 600 women workers at the La Licorera rum factory, which is attached to the sugar combine. This demand was won. In both of these struggles, and since, FO militants have suffered repression from the government and the management.

Construction workers: In May, 1987 2,000 construction workers gathered in Managua. They overwhelmingly rejected new work rules that would have meant an increase in production quotas, a wage cut, and the displacement of older workers. Energetic protests broke out at 13 of 23 work projects in Managua. As well, protests extended to San Isidro, Esteli and to the basic grains project in Tipitapa -- all of which are run by the privately-owned SO and IPE Company. Over 100 workers were fired in reprisals against their protests. While the CGTI leader said he was willing to "submit to the work rules", the FO took an active part in building up the protests. In June the government agreed to suspend the application of

the new work rules.

Pig farm on outskirts of Managua: One of five large state-run pig farms in the country. These five farms have 450 workers and produce 40% of the country's pork. In 1985 workers at the farm voted to break with the CST and to affiliate to the FO. They had felt that the CST union wasn't paying any attention to their demands; rather it had wanted them simply to increase production and hadn't paid attention to what they needed to live and to be able to produce. The workers felt they could fight better under the leadership of FO. They have since won certain gains with regard to health care. And are fighting for greater say in the decisions affecting their conditions and disciplinary steps. They are also demanding a library so that the workers, many of whom are illiterate, can educate themselves.

Organizing the poor peasants. The MLPN also builds FO among the peasants in the countryside and has helped establish fighting cooperatives among them.

For example, a cooperative of landless peasants was organized by the FO in Jinotega's San Gabriel valley. This is a war zone on the Honduras border. The cooperativists formed a militia, armed with AK-47's, and prepared to fight to defend their village and the revolution.

In August, 1986 they seized 220 mansanas of land from a local landlord. They have suffered cruel exploitation as fieldhands for this tyrant. But after months of inaction by the Agrarian Reform authorities, they installed 40 families on the lands and began producing food for the cooperative's benefit. A struggle is still under way to take more families into the coop and occupy additional land to support them. <>

CORRESPONDENCE

FOR THE ARIAS PLAN

Below we reprint a letter in support of the Arias plan which we received in late October from a member of the Latin American Solidarity Committee at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor.

Dear ...

It was very interesting talking to you. It really got me thinking. Here's what I think:

You say: 1) the Arias Plan doesn't address the roots of imperialism and class struggle in Central America; 2) it is therefore fundamentally flawed, and 3) should be opposed.

I say: Right on the first two, wrong on the third. We are solidarity activists, i.e., in active solidarity with the struggle and collective will of the Nicaraguan people. Do you agree that, at the present historical moment, the power structures of the FSLN represent the legitimate voice and collective will, imperfect though it may be, of the Nicaraguan people? Are the Sandinistas betraying the goals of the revolution, the goals of Sandino, the liberation of the workers and peasants? I think not. If the Sandinistas choose to accept the Arias accords, if the Nicaraguan people through their revolutionary party choose to accept all the flaws and limitations of the Arias plan, set up a Commission of National Reconciliation, etc., we should respect that choice.

Opposing the Arias Plan is counterproductive. It adds divisions when we should be working for unity. We should stand behind the Nicaraguan government. My strong sense is that the FSLN Directorate knows what it's doing. There may well be more subtle historical forces and strategies at work than your analysis accounts for. But that's largely beside the point -- the point is that Jaime Wheelock and Bayardo Arce and Tomas Borge and Humberto and Daniel Ortega, and all the rest think -- it's their voices who matter, not ours. The FSLN vanguard party as the legitimate, collective will of the revolutionary Nicaraguan people, has chosen to accept and try to work through the framework of the Arias Peace Plan. We should support that choice. Either we're in solidarity, or we're not. Either we stand behind the FSLN, or we don't.

There were a further series of questions the article you gave me failed to address: Where do the revolutionary-popular movements throughout

Central America stand in relation to the Esquipulas Accords? (See enclosed photocopy of FMLN statement - [omitted from the Supplement]) The FMLN-FDR is behind it. The Guatemalan and Honduran labor movements and popular movements are behind it. The people of Nicaragua are overwhelmingly behind it. They want peace. Who are we to oppose all of these movements?

In short, it is good that we criticize and recognize the limitations of Esquipulas, which are admittedly many and deep, but we should support the Esquipulas Process because it is the will of the exploited workers and peasants throughout Central America, as expressed through their popular organizations, that Esquipulas be supported. That's what self-determination means.

So that's what I've been thinking. Publish this in your newspaper, if you want. Again, it was a pleasure and highly stimulating to meet you, and good luck in your work. (I'd be interested to hear a response.)

M.S.

Comment by the Supplement:

Thank you for your letter. It is important for activists to discuss key issues such as the Arias plan. The more informed our movement, the stronger we will be.

The problem with the Arias plan is that it aims to undermine the Nicaraguan revolution. It seeks to gain from Nicaragua by diplomacy what the CIA and the contras have not succeeded in obtaining by murder and bombing. It has already extracted one concession after another from the Sandinistas, and all Nicaragua has gotten in return has been a stepping up of the contra war.

One need only read the explanation of the Arias plan given by its Democratic Party supporters in Congress, or by Arias himself and the other pro-U.S. presidents in Central America. Various Democratic Party figures even say that if the Nicaraguans do not give enough concessions to the

U.S., then the failure of the Arias plan can be blamed on them and this will provide a rationale for the use of U.S. military force.

The Arias plan tramples on the right to self-determination

The Arias plan is brutal interference with the internal affairs of the Nicaraguan people. It declares that Nicaraguan affairs must be acceptable to the Central American regimes. And it legitimizes the debates between Congress and the White House on what Nicaraguan affairs should look like. Since the Arias plan, the newspapers have been filled like never before with such discussion. If the right to self-determination means anything at all, it has to require rejection of the Arias plan.

What is solidarity?

It is true that we should build a solidarity movement with the Nicaraguan and other Central American peoples. But solidarity is expressed by the struggle against the common imperialist enemy. It presupposes that everyone think for themselves, for no one will fight with verve and enthusiasm unless they are convinced and dedicated supporters of the path of struggle. It is not a violation of the right to self-determination to have a different view than Daniel Ortega or Tomas Borge, even if they were the true voice of all Nicaraguan toilers, which they aren't.

How do Reagan and the CIA violate Nicaragua's right to self-determination? It isn't because they have different opinions from the Nicaraguans. It is because they are brutally attacking Nicaragua through fire and sword, through war and through diplomatic pressure, through economic blockade and economic sabotage.

Obstacles to the movement

The difficulties in the U.S. solidarity movement aren't caused by divisions over the role of the Arias plan. They are caused by illusions in the Democratic Party and the bourgeois liberals. The leaders who support the Democratic Party liberals have cancelled demonstrations and sought to tone down militancy in order not to frighten the liberals away. They have sought to have the movement coordinate with the liberals and support their maneuvers, rather than develop a consistent struggle against imperialism based on the working masses.

Class differences in Nicaragua

Nor is the Sandinista leadership the collective will of all Nicaraguans. There is a class struggle

in Nicaragua and there are different class forces. The Sandinistas seek a compromise between the toilers and the bourgeoisie. The Marxist-Leninist Party of Nicaragua is the voice of the class-conscious workers. It is the only party that stands for consistent revolution in Nicaragua. And it denounces the Arias plan.

Soon there will be a tour of the U.S. by a delegation of the Nicaraguan Marxist-Leninists. It was going to be this month, but it has been postponed till early next year. We hope that you and other activists can come hear them and ask them questions about the internal situation in Nicaragua, the role of the Sandinistas, and the struggle of the Nicaraguan revolutionary workers.

Furthermore, among the Sandinista rank-and-file there itself is also a certain discontent with various of the concessions demanded by the Arias plan. As the concessions increase, this discontent may well grow.

In El Salvador

In El Salvador, the liberation forces have been placed in a ticklish situation by the Arias plan. The FMLN leadership supports the Arias plan. At the same time, it protests against being considered the Salvadoran equivalent of the contras (as it does in the document you sent us). It neglects to point out that this is a key part of the Arias plan. In this issue of the Supplement, we carry a lead article on further difficulties the Arias plan has brought to the Salvadoran struggle.

Looking into things

We believe it is correct to examine seriously the views of the various forces in Central America. This is part of solidarity. But support for the Arias plan is not the only trend in Central America. And even if it were, serious study of the views of, say, the Sandinistas does not mean one has to copy their stands and follow their every zig and zag as they balance between the revolution and the bourgeoisie. Rather it means seeking to get a clear picture of what is going on in Nicaragua in particular and Central America in general. We believe that this picture will show that the Arias plan is harmful to the struggle and must be opposed.

And the Arias plan itself must be examined seriously. One cannot simply accept the optimistic phrases of the Sandinista leadership. One must examine what the plan actually is. And one must realize that the Sandinistas are the smallest minority in the commissions that will determine the meaning of the phrases in the Arias plan. It is Duarte and Arias and Azcona etc. that will do the

deciding -- according, in large part, to how Reagan and the Democrats pull their strings.

We hope that the activists in Ann Arbor will continue to look into the issues raised by the

differences concerning the Arias plan. And we hope that they will take part in welcoming the delegation of the Nicaraguan Marxist-Leninists when they arrive. <>

CORRESPONDENCE

AGAINST THE ARIAS PLAN

Below we reprint a statement against the Arias plan from a prisoner correspondent, Ana Lucia Gelabert, who is a member of PURE (Prisoners United for Revolutionary Education). She sent us a copy of a letter she submitted to the Mexican newspaper Excelsior. We have translated her article and its title into English.

Esquipulas II: Imperialist Triumph?

In light of the recent series of concessions that the Sandinista government has made to the White House gangsters, in turn getting only more and greater intransigence from them, the question is posed: How and when was it the contras won? (Or that the Sandinista leadership, with its back to the people, decided to surrender). Pathetic examples of all this are the recent Reaganite request of 270 million more dollars to assassinate innocent victims. Or the recent attack (repelled on Oct. 14) on 5 towns in the Department of Chontales, aimed at cutting the Huigalpa-Rama transoceanic highway. The aggression continues as if nothing happened, while the government gives away favors under the pretext of "peace". For the good of what?

We distinguish here between the Sandinistas and the government. The first, who constitute the immense majority of the Nicaraguan people, are those that really made the Revolution: as much the anti-Somocista triumph of the 19 of July of 1979, that they realized without the help of anybody, as in the later war, shortages, inflation, lines, etc., with which the Gringos are trying to strangle them. Sandinistas are those that fight and die, or that are obliged to travel on mined roads, or to live in towns exposed to the ambushes of the mercenaries; and not who live in the luxurious neighborhoods of Managua. Thus, if fear has entered the Sandinista rulers, let them buy a dog! But do

not betray the conquests and aspirations of the people and their Revolution for the sake of "peace". Since the people will never surrender.

Imperialism, that is, international finance monopoly capitalism, is neither peaceful nor reasonable, nor does it aspire to be so or ever will be, nor will it be so by its idiosyncrasy. Therefore, before the new imperialist offensive disguised as a sheep winning the Nobel Peace Prize, the Sandinistas, that is, the people, must:

1. Consolidate the popular participation and command within the Sandinista Popular Army. Reenforce the constitution and role of the militias and Sandinista Committees of Defense: in every factory or farm, in every school, on every block. The arms and the power must always be in the hands of the people! And not to be snatched away from them under the pretext that there is "peace".

2. Demand the growth and effective participation of workers, peasants, technicians and professionals, students in the planning and administration of the enterprises, schools, ministries. Total and immediate purging of those "revolutionary" cadres that have fallen into bureaucratic abuses, nepotism or corruption. The means of production must always be in the hands of the toilers!

3. Today more than ever increase the militancy and revolutionary vigilance of the masses, -- keeping an eye on the leaders! -- their revolutionary education and class consciousness, showing in this way to the bourgeoisie and its allies, present and

potential, that the revolutionary process is irreversible. Zero denationalization nor devolution of the wealth confiscated from the reactionaries. Expropriation of the San Antonio sugar combine (property of the multi-millionaire Pellas, today resident in Miami) and similar enterprises of the counterrevolution. Not a step back!

4. Respond to every imperialist aggression with effective steps of greater revolutionary advance. Step by step!

Nevertheless, the attitude adopted by the Sandinista leadership is timid, vacillating: for example, we compare the cases of the daily La Prensa, organ of reaction, paid for by the CIA (cancelled checks published by Barricada); with El Pueblo, organ of Frente Obrero and the Marxist-leninist Party of Nicaragua, whose equipment and workshops the CIA did not pay for, but the Nicaraguan workers with their sweat. La Prensa already received permission to renew its fifth columnist work and will even receive for this government assistance (paper, ads). Something similar happens with Radio KKKatolica. Nevertheless, El Pueblo, confiscated in January of 1980, is still confiscated; despite that the MLPN and the FO participated in the active anti-Somocista struggle (with the Popular Anti-Somocista Militias, MILPAS, that fought the National Guard) and later have maintained an irreproachable revolutionary conduct. Will it be that only the traitors can benefit from Esquipulas II?

Peace is welcome and very necessary, always and when it would be a true peace and respects the sovereignty of the Nicaraguan people and their Revolution. But the Sandinista leadership must find out, definitively, that what makes it possible that Dona Ronalda and his Robot Doles or whoever speak of peace and not of "little three day invasions" or other Yankee bluster, is not the petty bourgeois illusion that the imperialists decide some day to be pacifists or reasonable, but the fear that the imperialists have of the people. Fear of the wrath of those they exploit. Panic that such a "little invasion" will be the spark that spreads the revolutionary torch from the Rio Bravo in the North to the southern tip of the Tierra del Fuego. As Sandino predicted and Che attempted to realize.

Ana Lucia Gelabert

[A prisoner in Gatesville, Texas]

16 October 1987

Comment by the Supplement:

The above letter contains a spirited denunciation of imperialism. It sets forward the concept of

answering imperialism with revolutionary mobilization. It correctly distinguishes between the Sandinista rank-and-file and the Sandinista leadership. And it defends the rights of the Marxist-Leninist Party of Nicaragua.

It also is important for the prisoner movement in that it takes up major political issues outside the confines of the prison. The prisoner movement must fight the intolerable conditions the prisoners face; but to develop political consciousness, it must also deal with the other burning issues of the class struggle.

We would, however, like to point out some differences between the approach of this letter to the situation inside Nicaragua and our approach. The letter calls the Sandinista rank-and-file, and possibly the revolutionary people as a whole, Sandinistas, while it calls the Sandinista leadership the government. In effect, it sets forward the revolutionary spirit of the masses as true Sandinism against the course of the present Sandinista leadership.

We however believe it is better to recognize the petty-bourgeois nature that the Sandinista program always had. The very existence of the MLPN and of its trade union center Frente Obrero, and the history of its MILPAS militias, all referred to in the letter, shows that Sandinism wasn't the only trend in the revolution. And even with respect to the Sandinista rank-and-file, there is a difference between the Sandinista philosophy and the aspirations of the masses who followed their lead.

There are, for example, many Sandinista rank-and-file whose heart beats for continuing the revolution and for socialism, but the Sandinista program stands for something else. The present course of the Sandinista government is a development from the errors of Sandinism of the past, and not a totally new phenomenon. For example, right after the revolutionary victory over Somoza, the Sandinista leadership sought to rule in coalition with the bourgeoisie. So the path of compromise with the domestic bourgeoisie and foreign imperialism is nothing new for them.

We think it is better to bring out openly the clash of the Sandinista and revolutionary proletarian stands. We believe that the MLP of Nicaragua is correct when it appeals to the Sandinista rank-and-file, but does not present its program as refined Sandinism but as a proletarian stand as opposed to the petty-bourgeois ideology of official Sandinism.

We have been carrying for some time news of the struggle in the Texas prisons and of the prisoner organization PURE, and we look forward to further correspondence from the revolutionary prisoners. <>

NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN THE LITERARY DEBATE

Supplement editorial:

The publication of **Struggle**, the literary journal of the Detroit Branch of the Marxist-Leninist Party, has provided an impetus for revolutionary cultural work. At the same time, certain comrades in Buffalo were dissatisfied with it and began the literary debate over the relation of politics to literature.

Unfortunately, the discontented comrades did not bring out their views openly, but simply spread here and there a demoralized atmosphere about revolutionary literature and **Struggle**. They were not simply raising disagreements about this or that literary question, but had become skeptical of the very idea of a materialist assessment of literature and of maintaining a proletarian class stand on literary questions. The discontented consisted mainly of comrades who had become demoralized in general about revolutionary work, and it turned out that they were taking up university-style criticism of Marxism.

A dramatic change

The last few months have seen a radical transformation in the nature of this debate. With the publication of articles in the **Supplement** in August and September, this debate has been transformed from a matter of gossip and narrow personal diplomacy into an issue that all comrades can deal with. This is a healthy development.

Reports so far indicate that these articles have been met with enthusiasm and approval. They have created more interest in **Struggle** itself, including among some comrades who weren't previously interested. They have helped clarify some questions concerning the Marxist-Leninist stand on literature. They did not aim at eliminating the inevitable amount of diversity in evaluating literature due to differences of taste, background, etc. among comrades. And of course various comrades have had questions or issues with this or that section of the articles. But the discussion on these articles has reinforced a lively atmosphere on cultural matters, because the issues in the literary debate do affect Party activists and Party work.

A new controversy over method

In Buffalo, the discontented comrades were upset with the change in the debate. The main

thrust of their complaints was that they had been mistreated by the bringing up of these issues in the **Supplement**.

Unfortunately, the discontented comrades never expressed their complaints directly to us. But we think that the **Supplement** and the Party as a whole should have the right to hear and evaluate criticism made of it, particularly bitter criticism which amounts to another stage in the literary debate. And this time it makes no sense to wait two years to see if we will be presented directly with these criticisms. So we have to rely on accounts of these criticisms.

However, it is possible to get a fairly accurate picture of the general tone and spirit of these new criticisms. Let us examine some of the complaints from the comrades who wrote the draft letter to **Struggle** which denounced the sectarianism and doctrinairism allegedly revealed in the first issue. (This letter was never completed or sent in, but it was read to various comrades.) We will deal with some of the issues raised, we believe, by the comrade who we think is the main author of the draft letter.

He said that his letter didn't deal with the Party, but only with views expressed by Tim Hall, the editor of **Struggle**. After all, it was argued, **Struggle** was not a national publication of the MLP, but only a journal of the Detroit Branch. And the Detroit Branch itself refuses (in **Struggle's** statement of editorial policy) to take responsibility for all the views of Tim Hall. So what right had a Central Committee member to raise these issues in the **Supplement** for discussion?

And he also pointed to the Party's desire to avoid getting bogged down in literary controversy. This meant, he claimed, that it was wrong for the Party to discuss the criticisms made of **Struggle**.

Furthermore, he claimed that his views had been distorted. He demanded to know why the Party hadn't taken the effort to know his views accurately before writing these articles.

In the course of his complaints to other comrades in Buffalo, he produced the draft letter to **Struggle** and gave it to a few comrades. This was supposed to prove the justice of his complaints about misrepresentation. These comrades sent in a copy of the draft letter to the central Party apparatus. This too infuriated him. He wanted to know why they had done this without asking his permission. Apparently, he had given them copies of the letter on "lease" so to speak.

On these questions of method

What is the correct method to deal with the literary controversies? Was the Party really at fault for opening an honest and open discussion among all comrades? Or were the discontented comrades mistaken in relying on gossip and the spreading of a demoralized mood? Since this is being made an issue in Buffalo, we will go into it further.

It is said that the Party had no right to discuss criticisms made of comrade Hall.

But was it revolutionary or honorable or even fair that a document is prepared denouncing comrade Hall's views as sectarian and doctrinaire, and comrade Hall is never shown this criticism or even notified of it? And when comrade Hall personally talked to the main author of the document, not a word was said about its existence or about the criticism. Instead the document was read to certain other comrades; these criticisms were not retracted during the two years since they were first made; and comrade Hall was kept in the dark. And, irony of ironies, this draft letter of criticism begins with a declaration that

"we believe that a rather full exposition of our criticisms -- and any discussion of differences which might ensue -- can only assist our common cause."

And can it said to be revolutionary or even straight-forward to keep up the pretense that only comrade Hall is being criticized, when the draft letter is in fact denouncing comrade Hall for holding the basic materialist views on literature and the class struggle?

For that matter, why are Party journals and Party members (even if some of them are Central Committee members) forbidden to express their views on literary questions except as a direct reply to criticism of themselves personally? This defies all logic. Don't communist militants (and all class-conscious workers and serious activists) have the right to express their views on literary matters and any other important issue?

Furthermore, the talk about the Party not wanting to know the real views of the discontented is absurd. It is the Party that has taken the literary debate seriously and finally acted to objectify it. And for one thing, right from the start, the main author of the draft letter was asked by some comrades to send it in to **Struggle** when he read it to them. Then when recently he finally gave some comrades his letter to prove how he had been wronged, it was he himself who got mad that the letter had been sent on.

Nor is it such a mystery as to why the literary controversy was finally dealt with two years after it begun. At first, it was believed that the

mysterious document (the draft letter) would indeed be completed and sent in. But the letter was never sent in and so a direct opportunity to deal with it never came up. This also made it hard to judge the nature or seriousness of this controversy. But, as things turned out, the controversy refused to die away with the passage of time. It kept coming up. The demoralized ideas weren't retracted, and they continued to serve to undermine revolutionary spirit. Hence finally the **Supplement** took up the issue this August, tracing the evolution of the issue over the last two years.

The essence of the matter is that no method of criticism would satisfy various of the discontented. They seem to regard any fundamental criticism of their views as "name-calling", etc. They may call others' views "sectarian" and "doctrinaire" on "fundamental" issues, but they themselves are presumably above criticism. This is why the articles in the **Supplement**, which referred to them in a mild and comradely way, have resulted in their display of hurt feelings.

On the draft letter to Struggle

It seems to us that all these complaints about the method used by the **Supplement** to address the literary debate are a smokescreen. They are intended to hide the mistaken methods used by the discontented. And they distract attention from the fact that the liquidationist views on literature haven't been retracted. Nor, despite the accusation that we have distorted someone's view, have we yet been presented with any particular example of what view we distorted. And so far the method of criticism of the **Supplement** has some similarity to how comrade Hall was treated two years ago: fierce charges are made to others about the method used by the **Supplement**, but we are not to be directly addressed.

Nevertheless, we believe that the authors of the draft letter have done the Party a service by finally giving it to Party comrades. This letter is one of the few documents that provides an objective, written record of the views of some of the discontented comrades. One of our aims in opening a discussion in the **Supplement** was to "objectify" the literary debate, and this document helps do that. It is for this reason that we are printing this document in this issue, along with comments by a Central Committee member.

By printing this document, we do not intend to pin the author of this letter permanently to the views in this document. We would be happy if he changes his views back towards revolutionary materialism and Marxism-Leninism. Nor do we regard the draft letter as the only expression of views of the discontented that we must deal with.

But the draft letter has become something of a historical document in its own right. And it deserves to be available for all to see; it should not be restricted arbitrarily to a handful. <>

**IN DEFENSE OF REVOLUTIONARY LITERATURE:
A REPLY TO THE DRAFT LETTER
- Part One -**

by a member of the Central Committee

Recently the **Supplement** received the draft letter from two years ago concerning the publication of the first issue of **Struggle**. This is the first chance I have had to read it; until now, I had only had the chance to talk to people who had heard it read to them but who couldn't do much more than verify its existence. This letter was never sent, but its ideas circulated among the comrades who were discontented with Party literary work and with **Struggle**, and it was read to comrades who they were trying to influence. It provides a written record of the views of the discontented.

I believe that this draft letter verifies the concerns that were expressed in the editorial "On the Literary Debate" and in my article "Literature and the Class Struggle" (see the August issue of the **Supplement**). If anything, this letter is more extreme and direct in its liquidationism than what I would have imagined.

Underneath the high-flown phrases about literary history and literary theory and some Marxist phrases, the draft letter raises the white flag to the present-day literary establishment. And it is not just really talking about literary questions. It actually is dealing with the relation of our Party to the various political trends of today.

The letter begins by expressing the desire for the vigorous development of revolutionary literature. But as one reads the letter, one discovers that the letter stands for a rather peculiar variety of "revolutionary literature". This is a "revolutionary" literature which is afraid to clarify unclear ideas for fear of sectarianism and dogmatism. It is a literature which should disdain excessive concern for the class conflicts and ideological conflicts of our time for fear of narrowness and doctrinarism. It is a literature which should regard Marxism-Leninism as only another ism, one

among many interesting ideas, because Marxism-Leninism allegedly has nothing consistent to say to writers. It is a literature which should try to cast off the fetters of politics and ideology.

By the end of the letter, we find that it is a literature which should be afraid to distinguish itself from the bourgeois trends, afraid to criticize Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot, afraid even to talk about the existence of bourgeois trends in literature. Indeed, by the end of the letter the authors cannot talk of the bourgeois trends of the 20th century in culture without putting quotation marks around the word "bourgeois"; this means that the letter is only willing to admit the existence of so-called bourgeois trends, and not literary trends that are truly, seriously, bourgeois.

After all that, what is left to the concept of a revolutionary literature?

After all that, is it surprising that, whatever the intentions of the authors of the draft letter, in fact a negative atmosphere was created towards proletarian revolutionary literature in particular and toward revolutionary work in general? The discontented comrades refrained more and more from taking part in revolutionary work.

But it is good that the draft letter begins by raising the issue of how to improve revolutionary literature. To begin our examination of this letter, let us apply this criterion to the views set forward. Let us repeatedly come back to the issue of what advice the letter is giving, and what advice should be given, to writers and readers of revolutionary literature. This will help in cutting through some of the high-flown terminology which gets in the way of comprehending the letter.

Revolutionary literature and the class struggle

The draft letter begins by opposing the statement in the editorial of the first issue of **Struggle**

that

"There can be no great literature which does not take full part in the struggle of ideas in society and in the class struggle which is at the root of the ideological struggle."

Opposition to this statement is one of the main themes of the letter. This is the starting point from which the draft letter deduces the existence of problems with **Struggle**. This is part of what the authors of the draft letter regard as

"...a definite problem in your [**Struggle's**] editorial statement which has fundamental bearing on the orientation of your journal."

What does this mean as far as giving advice to revolutionary writers? In essence, it means that the draft letter regards it as wrong to advise revolutionary writers

"... to take full part in the struggle of ideas ... and in the class struggle which is at the root of the ideological struggle."

This is supposed to have

"...potentially harmful consequences for the [revolutionary] literary productions **Struggle** encourages and for the approach of its review articles..."

But what is left of the concept of revolutionary literature if revolutionary writers are not passionate partisans of the oppressed in the ongoing class struggle? How do the authors of the draft letter conceive of revolutionary literature?

What is revolutionary literature?

Actually, the authors of the draft letter never tell us what they consider revolutionary literature to be. The draft letter even states parenthetically, with respect to the very issue it itself raises concerning taking part in the ideological and class struggles, that

"(We will refrain from arguing over the formulation per se.)"

To me this is incredible. The draft letter complains bitterly about this formulation. It declares this a problem with "fundamental bearing" on literary production. And then it casually declines to take an open and direct stand on the issue. This method of approach is not serious or straightforward. It amounts to playing cat and mouse with the revolutionary writers and activists.

It is not just an accident that the letter declines to take an open stand on the demand for participation in the ideological and class struggles. This would lead directly to the issue of what is revolutionary literature and how does it differ from bourgeois culture. And as we shall see, all

the arguments of the letter lead to the demand that revolutionary literature should cease to exist as something distinct from bourgeois culture. But the authors of the draft letter probably don't want to admit to themselves, and certainly not to others, that this is where their arguments are leading.

The Search for Great Literature

Indeed, the authors of the draft letter imperceptibly change their standpoint from that of worrying about revolutionary literature to worrying about "great" literature. Picking on the word "great" that appears in the **Struggle** editorial, they run amok with it. They complain that **Struggle's** statement might mean that

"...only Party literature or at most partisan-political literature of the proletarian revolution can, by definition, be great, while non-Party literature must be judged, by definition, to be fundamentally defective..."

If we neglect the anti-Party feeling that comes through, they are basically complaining against **Struggle** concentrating the attention of revolutionary writers on revolutionary literature. The editorial in **Struggle** declared that

"...the writer must take the stand of the working class and participate in the most profound battles of present-day battles of present-day society."

This appears to be what bothers the authors of the draft letter and what they regard as a denunciation of all non-Party literature as "fundamentally defective". In short, they have wandered off into the pursuit of some above-class and above-the-struggle greatness, rather than passionate commitment to revolutionary work and to partisanship of the oppressed.

The draft letter speaks with reverence of what one might call "high culture". Oh, for the Stendhals, the Pounds, the T.S. Eliots, the romanticists, the impressionists, etc. etc. They don't apply a critical standard (except to the proletarian writer Gorky), but instead swallow it all in one mass and don't even hesitate before the Pounds and T.S. Eliots. They are dazzled by this high culture and try to make the revolutionary writers feel inferior before its "greatness".

The authors of the draft letter might, I presume, condemn "low culture", but apparently believe that "high culture" transcends the class struggle. In essence, for them the problem of "fundamental bearing" is that **Struggle** is not impressed by high culture, but is so "doctrinaire" as to apply a materialist standard to all culture, whether high or low, crude or refined, on TV or

in university libraries.

An absurd charge of sectarianism

So the draft letter recoils from the connection between literature and the class and ideological struggles. It immediately goes on to denigrate the need for an independent communist stand. As we shall see, it regards such a stand as sectarianism.

The charge of sectarianism first comes up with respect to the different trends in literature. The draft letter pretends that the editorial in **Struggle** lumps everyone but straight Party writers into one reactionary mass, as nothing better than fascists and clerical aristocrats.

The draft letter points to the different trends in the poetry that the editorial in **Struggle** mentions. These include, besides the proletarian revolutionary trend,

(1) those who, in **Struggle's** words, "raised a passionate and militant cry of protest, as did some of the young black, white and latino activist-poets of the '60's" but who were not clear about society and so were unable to "inspire their readers onto the ... path of revolutionary struggle".

(2) the "established poets" who could only manage "impressionistic poems and mystical howls" at best.)

The draft letter suggests that the editorial in **Struggle** lumps both these trends

"...together with those somehow associated with the 'fascist' Pound and the 'aristocrat' Eliot..."

but actually the editorial referred not to a fascist trend but to the bad effects on poetry of

"esoteric meanderings in the manner of the fascist Ezra Pound and the clerical aristocrat T.S. Eliot..."

The draft letter then makes the amazing assertion that **Struggle** groups all non-revolutionary writers together and so is making a "patently sectarian error".

As the saying goes, there are none so blind as those who don't want to see. Only comrades who were blinded by the desire to charge the party and the revolution with sectarianism and dogmatism and doctrinairism could think **Struggle** groups together "activist-poets" who "raise a passionate and militant cry of protest" with "the fascist Ezra Pound and the clerical aristocrat T.S. Eliot".

In fact, the reason for this astonishing tirade from the draft letter is that it wants to denounce any independent communist stand. In particular,

1. it demands that communists and revolutionaries refrain from any independent stand with respect to the militant

activist-poets;

2. and it even ends up defending Pound and T.S. Eliot, thus demanding that revolutionary literature give up any real criticism of official bourgeois "high culture" at all.

Let us examine this point by point.

Denying the need for the revolutionary proletariat to constitute a distinct trend

The draft letter tries to give a militant sound to its charge of sectarianism by raising the issue of the "activist-poets" of the 60's. How dare anyone criticize their views?

The draft letter states

"...Far from opposing unclear protests which are militant and passionate (Oh what we would give for more of them today!), far from lumping them with reactionaries, far from constituting yourself as a trend in opposition to them, it is your duty to embrace them."

Now who said anything about opposing the unclear but oppositional protests of the masses or of the activist-poets? But for the authors of the draft letter, any critical stand towards such protests, any communist independence, is called opposing the protests; it is automatically a dogmatic, sectarian, doctrinaire negation of these protests and of the mass movement. For the draft letter, the worst of all things is "constituting yourself as a trend" distinct from the general, somewhat leftist milieu. In the view of the draft letter, this means opposing the protests, opposing the mass movements.

And what is left to the concept of revolutionary literature if its doesn't constitute a distinct trend. The draft letter begins by supporting revolutionary literature, but opposes the idea of a trend separate from unclear literature. It believes that one cannot distinguish itself from anything that is "passionate and militant".

The draft letter reduces revolutionary sentiment to sighing about the good old days. As it says:

"(Oh what we would give for more of them today.)"

The experience of the 60's

But, as a matter of fact, the authors of the draft letter have forgotten what the 60's was really like. They knew at one time, but have rebounded away from this apparently painful knowledge.

In the high tide of the 60's and early 70's every possible view and trend competed among the

masses. And many of these views, although put forward passionately, had horrible effects in undermining the movement, misdirecting or even destroying people who had good sentiments, etc. Indeed, what was a revolutionary supposed to do in the 60's? Be revolutionary when with revolutionaries; but oppose revolutionary change when with the pacifists; become an anti-party and anti-Marxist shouter when with the anarchists; and glory in the wonders of drugs when with the counter-culturalists?

To accomplish anything in the 60's, one had to combine love for the revolutionary masses with the utmost enthusiasm to dispel "unclear" ideas and to put forward the revolutionary path. And our advice to revolutionary literature today has to be to combine sensitivity to how the masses come into motion with a passionate desire to bring forward the truths of class struggle and revolution.

The experience of revolutionary work today

And look at the experience of Party cultural work today. This work does not simply merge into the fashionable left circles. It "constitutes itself a trend" distinct from the fashionable leftism of the circles around the Democratic Party. It seeks to form and guide a trend opposed to liquidationism and bourgeois liberalism. It opposes the opportunism of the leaders of the reformism and liberal circles, although it unites with the activists and masses who are still under the influence of such leaders and such opportunist ideas.

Well, what is the result? Are the "leaflets set to music", the revolutionary songs, the cultural groups, isolated from the masses?

On the contrary, our cultural groups are well-received at demonstrations whose leaders are reformists with the utmost hostility to revolutionary politics. Despite the hostility of the reformist leaders, despite their desire to eliminate our Party, its banners, its slogans, its literature, its leaflets, our Party and its cultural groups find a positive reception. Activists listen to the revolutionary songs, and they find that the songs are pleasing and raise issues of interest to them. Not all activists of course. But enough activists either like the songs or at least recognize them as part of the mass movement that our Party can maintain this work in the face of desperate hostility from the opportunist bigshots.

Here we find that life, real life, the experience of revolutionary work, proves the falsity of the charge of sectarianism.

And it is a good thing. If we had to follow the plan from the draft letter, it would not just affect the style of our songs and poetry, but the content. If we do not have the spirit to oppose

"unclear" ideas, how could we oppose, say, the Arias plan or promote the revolutionary struggle or the Nicaraguan Marxist-Leninists. After all, there are many militant and passionate activists who are under the sway of the Arias plan, or of uncritical support for the Sandinistas, or of belief in the Democratic Party liberals, etc. I don't think that it will prove possible to, say, oppose the Arias plan in "political" work or the trade union bureaucrats in the factories, but embrace without reservation as a true reflection of life cultural works that promote the glories of Arias or that portray the bureaucrats as fighting in support of the workers.

A revolutionary literature that doesn't call for revolution

The draft letter goes further. It ridicules the notion that revolutionary literature should be designed to inspire the masses to revolutionary action. It takes up Party terminology concerning "oppositional trends" and puts this forward as an alternative to building the revolutionary trend. It writes, concerning unclear literature of the activist-poets

"Has it met with the approval of the masses, and if so what strivings among them is it related to, and has it perhaps even inspired them to action? (Please note that this last question does not amount to asking whether it inspired the masses onto the path of revolutionary struggle, which by the phrase "the only path which offers any hope of progress" you make the only legitimate and progressive call to action that literature can make.)" (Underlining added)

So the authors of the draft letter no longer believe that the path of revolutionary struggle is the only path which offers any hope of progress and they do not believe that inspiring revolutionary feelings is the legitimate goal of revolutionary literature. Remember, the draft letter is written explicitly for the goal of guiding revolutionary authors, and it is denigrating the goal of revolution. Revolution is at best another ism, another interesting idea, by no means the only legitimate and progressive one.

The class-conscious proletariat cherishes unclear and confused movements which are nevertheless oppositional because it sees the germ of revolutionary determination and consciousness developing in their midst. Meanwhile the authors of the draft letter have fallen into the attitude, to use an old phrase, of gazing with awe upon the posterior of the oppositional movements. This gives rise to two different ideas of what should be done with

respect to the mass movement. The class-conscious revolutionary does not romanticize the mass movements, but guides them to take up the tasks of the revolution. The draft letter denigrates the revolutionary struggle in the name of the mass movement and action. But, in that case, what right does the draft letter have to speak in the name of revolution?

Even defending Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot

The draft letter begins by presenting itself as the champion of the activist-poets and the unclear militants against the sectarianism and doctrinairism and dogmatism of **Struggle**. This is how it tries to give itself a certain revolutionary coloring. But it goes on to defend the disgraceful cult of the literary establishment around Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot.

At first, the letter accuses **Struggle** of grouping the activist-poets with Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot. This might seem as if the draft letter itself wanted to make a distinction. But it ends up attacking the editorial in **Struggle** for being "really preposterous" and having a "literary prejudice" for denouncing

"esoteric meanderings in the manner of the fascist Pound and the clerical aristocrat T.S. Eliot".

Struggle denounced Pound and Eliot in the course of advising the revolutionary writers to write clearly and to avoid the obscurity and elitism of today's cultural establishment. Should we on the contrary advise the revolutionary writers to imitate the methods of Pound and Eliot?

The draft letter, however, while casually accusing others of prejudice, has nothing concrete to say. It itself calls Pound and Eliot "the worst reactionaries". But it then lapses into general principles. It says nothing specific about Pound and Eliot but gives a series of platitudes to deter the revolutionary writers from having any class hatred against any reactionary. Why, even a reactionary might do something worthwhile in some sphere or other. (True, but the question is certain particular reactionaries, namely, Pound and Eliot.) Why, to condemn the cult of Pound and Eliot is supposedly the same as condemning "English free verse". Why, the draft letter implies, it means that one is uncultured:

"Just what exactly do you mean by 'esoteric meandering'? At a certain level of culture (i.e. low) some people will dismiss all poetry as 'esoteric meanderings'."

It might as well say outright that "Why, you are simply an illiterate, uneducated, uncultured peasant if you don't worship at the shrine of whatever is

fashionable among the university circles or with the bourgeois cultural establishment."

If the draft letter wanted to deal seriously with Pound and Eliot, it should have shown which of their methods are allegedly of value for revolutionary writing. It would have had to either deny that Pound and Eliot were guilty of esoteric meanderings or advocate that esoteric meanderings were of value for revolutionary writers.

Instead, in effect, it simply ridicules those who don't fall in behind the current literary passions of the bourgeoisie. It doesn't matter that the passion of even liberal academicians for Pound and Eliot is a first-rate scandal that exposes the rottenness of the supposedly above-class "high culture" of the bourgeoisie. This "high culture" is instead to be presented as a model for the revolutionary writers.

A white flag in the face of the bourgeois literary establishment

When dealing with the activist poets, the draft letter denounced the editorial in **Struggle** for being doctrinaire for allegedly

"leav(ing) out of consideration the real, living relation that a work or trend of literature or a writer has to the actual forces and movements in society."

The draft letter believed that if a writer has some relation to the mass movement, it was doctrinaire and sectarian to criticize any of his or her unclear ideas. It gave up the task of communist independence with respect to trends in the mass movement.

Nevertheless, even if the draft letter misapplied this principle, it is not a bad idea at all to examine the relation of a writer to the actual forces and movements in society. This is one of the things that the editorial in **Struggle** was trying to do.

Very well, how did the draft letter itself carry out this task when it came to the question of Pound and Eliot? What was the "living relation" of Pound and Eliot to the actual forces and movements in society and what role does the cult of Pound and Eliot have today?

The letter is silent on this. I think that the letter's irritation at the criticism of Pound and Eliot, the letter's making this into one of the fundamental questions of orientation, is a symptom of a lack of will to fight the bourgeois cultural establishment. It is a white flag in front of the prejudices and fashions of present-day high culture.

Indeed, by the end of the letter the very idea that there is something wrong with the bourgeois cultural establishment is ridiculed. The letter talks about

"...the 'bourgeois' trends which are apt

(especially if they arose [in the] 20th century) to be treated as if they bore the mark of Cain..."

The class-conscious proletariat extracts everything of value from non-proletarian literature and art, whether romanticist, classicist, realist, impressionist etc., but it cannot accept the demand that it should worship uncritically at the altar of this literature. It can never be forgotten that revolutionary literature can only develop in bitter battle with the bulk of bourgeois literature and its representatives.

This white flag before bourgeois culture is dangerous, because revolutionary writers must have the spirit to defy the cultural establishment. The lords of high culture and university learning have set down a series of laws for culture. Anything that is revolutionary is by definition dogmatic and sectarian. Anything that uses the word "imperialism" is doctrinaire and unpolished and unpoetic (unless, of course, the literary work is attacking the proletariat as imperialist or is part of bourgeois war hysteria).

Revolutionary writers must have the spirit to struggle tooth-and-nail against the pressure of the cultural establishment. They can not expect to be published or praised. They see every day a ferocious war by the established writers, including most liberals, against revolutionary writing. The newspapers, the cultural journals, the universities critics and teachers, in short, the literary establishment, comes down like a ton of bricks.

We must raise the banner of rebellion, not the white flag, against the class prejudices of the literary establishment and of bourgeois high culture.

Casting aside revolutionary theory

According to the draft letter, this denigration of the bourgeois culture is a fundamental weakness which threatens the revolutionary writers. But the letter has a different attitude to the highest achievements of proletarian culture, such as revolutionary theory. It denigrates in a number of ways the importance of revolutionary theory for the writer.

To begin with, it states that revolutionary theory says nothing consistent about literature. There is supposedly no Marxist-Leninist line on literature. It states that:

"But perhaps you feel that the existence of proletarian literature over the past 100 years means that there is a well-worked out and correct line on literature? ... But to our minds, this is not the case, and rather things stand as follows. A hundred years of proletarian

literature (including in this works themselves, criticism and theory) has not produced a homogeneous body of literature, nor has it given rise to a clear line which settles even many basic questions on this front."

This is simply a denial of materialist theory in general and Marxism in particular. Marxism long ago pointed out that there is an ideological superstructure built on the economic base. It furthermore showed how to deal with the bourgeois culture, neither rejecting all previous culture nor swallowing it uncritically. It showed how revolutionary theory must be linked to revolutionary practice, pointing out that the philosophers of the past have only interpreted the world, while the point is to change it. And it defended materialist views on literature, which deal with literature as a reflection of the world.

Few comrades have had the chance to study the full Marxist-Leninist theory on literature. But I believe that what is at stake in the literary debate are the fundamental issues of Marxist theory, issues which comrades live by, issues such as those listed above. I believe that these views guide **Struggle**, even though **Struggle** exists not to give a theoretical exposition of literature but to actually develop revolutionary literature and criticism.

And I believe that it is these basic views, and not just some specifically literary issues, which are what bother the authors of the draft letter. They themselves talk about problems with "fundamental bearing" on the orientation of **Struggle** and not of secondary issues concerning subtle questions of literary history. They are raising such issues as whether revolutionary literature can criticize other political trends. They are raising the issue of whether revolutionary literature can really exist at all and whether the class stand should be abandoned.

The authors of the draft letter used to accept the Party program and regard Marxism-Leninism as the theoretical basis for the proletarian movement. But they are now throwing it aside as irrelevant. That is their right, of course. There is no law requiring one to be a revolutionary or a communist -- quite the contrary. But it is equally our right to laugh at them when they try to overturn the most scientific theory ever developed to guide the struggle of the oppressed for liberation by saying that this theory doesn't exist. This is the same way that bourgeois professors mock at Marxism in the economic, political, or other fronts. Why, they sneer, there are so many different views about Marxism. And the Marxists themselves call each other revisionists. Why, Marxism allegedly just doesn't exist. Where are the 100 years of absolute

homogeneity?

And so the professors spend decade after decade refuting this chimera, this ghost, this theory that allegedly isn't really there at all.

Parodying the Marxist theory

I don't know why anyone should expect 100 years of homogeneity in literature. I would have thought that revolutionary literature would reflect the level of struggle, the level of understanding, the passions and prejudices, the insights and the blunders, of the turbulent proletarian movement. This literature is exciting and vital because it is so alive. Marxist theory establishes the general framework with which to judge literary questions, it doesn't establish a pat formula and pat style for literary works.

If the authors of the draft letter had spent time unearthing some of this 100 years of proletarian literature, they might have made a contribution on this front. It is not so easy to get hold of most of this literature. The bourgeoisie suppresses it, not just through legal bans but through disregard, contempt, persecution of the revolutionary movement, etc. One of the tasks of **Struggle** is publicizing proletarian literature from the past or from other countries. But all the draft letter sees is a lack of homogeneity.

One gets the impression that the draft letter has a dogmatic parody of Marxism which it applies through out its arguments. The Marxist-Leninist assessment of literature, which **Struggle** stands for, is reduced to an absurd demand for "homogeneity". And the letter constantly suggests that to make an ideological, Marxist assessment of literature is simply to judge whether the literary works repeat some formulas word for word.

The relationship of literature to life

If I have time, I would like to write at least one more part to this reply to the draft letter (or see someone else deal with certain additional topics). In this first part, I have outlined how the drift of the draft letter is to deny revolutionary literature at all. This may not have been the subjective intention of the authors, but this is where all their arguments lead. In the next part, it would be useful to take up the draft letter's more theoretical arguments concerning literature and life.

The draft letter takes up a number of Marxist or materialist phrases about literature and turns them into their opposite. It says literature should reflect life, but concludes from this that literature operates in a sphere that goes beyond the class and ideological struggles. But if the class struggle is a real fact of life, a fundamental fact underlying the sound and fury, then the more literature reflects life, the more it will reflect the class struggle. If revolutionary theory is correct, if it actually shows the real forces in society, then the more literature is true to life, the more it will have to depict in artistic form the same forces described by Marxist-Leninist theory. The dualism of the draft letter between theory and life, between politics and life, means denying the relation of politics and theory to life.

The result is the draft letter has a passive idea of "life", a concept that excludes or forgets revolutionary practice. And indeed that is where the ideas of the draft letter have led. They have helped demobilize people from revolutionary work, or justify such demobilization.

Nor can one let pass the absurd view that literature is beyond ideology. If ideology and the ideological superstructure of society doesn't include literature and culture, then what does it include?

But I leave a detailed examination of this for next time. <>

DRAFT LETTER ON THE FIRST ISSUE OF STRUGGLE

The following letter was written after the appearance of the first issue of **Struggle** in June 1985. It was never sent to **Struggle** or even finished. Yet it was read to various comrades (but not to the editor of **Struggle**) and was among the opening statements in the literary debate. It has only become available to us since the Sept. issue of the **Supplement**.

We are reproducing this draft letter in its entirety. We have provided it with subheads in order to make this long document easier to read or refer back to. These subheads are neutral, simply indicating the subject matter of the letter or repeating its views. We have placed them in square brackets to indicate they are not part of the original document. We have indented quotations of any length in the letter, also simply to help the reader find his way around. And we have made minor grammatical corrections whenever the meaning was clear. Anything in square brackets was added by us, anything in parentheses was in the original draft letter.

A reply to this letter is contained elsewhere in this issue of the **Supplement**: see **In defense of revolutionary literature**, beginning on page 12.

To the editor [of **Struggle**],

[A problem with fundamental bearing on the orientation of Struggle]

We were pleased to receive the first number of your journal **Struggle** and welcome the publication of the work of revolutionary activists who are attempting to develop a revolutionary literature. But let us say right at the outset that we detect a definite problem in your editorial statement which has fundamental bearing on the orientation of your journal. We feel this problem is serious, with potentially harmful consequences for the literary productions **Struggle** encourages and for the approach of its review articles, etc. As we are enthusiastic for the same goals and as you are just starting out, we believe that a rather full exposition of our criticisms -- and any discussion of differences which might ensue -- can only assist our common cause.

[On the relationship of literature to the struggle of ideas and the class struggle]

In your editorial you declare that:

"There can be no great literature which does not take full part in the struggle of ideas in society and in the class struggle which is at the root of the ideological struggle."

This statement is open to a number of possible interpretations. (We will refrain from arguing over the formulation *per se*.) It can be interpreted broadly to mean that any body of literature taken as a whole is great only if -- in the main -- it is committed to the key problems of its time; [if] rather than abstaining from a serious commitment to the problems of social life, it is engaged in the cardinal spiritual conflicts of its people rather than withdrawing into the private concerns of individuals, etc.; so, for example, 19th century Russian literature is great. Conversely, this statement can be interpreted narrowly to mean that the extent to which a literary work is engaged in the ideological struggle and consciously designed to affect the political (i.e. class) struggle, and the correctness of the ideological and political line its author follows and "embodies" in the work is the (either basic or sole) criterion for evaluating it; so, necessarily, only Party literature or at most partisan political literature of the proletarian rev-

olution can, by definition, be great, while non-Party literature must be judged, by definition, to be fundamentally defective.

**[The poetry of the '60's and also
the question of Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot]**

As your editorial does not elaborate sufficiently, we have had to judge from your over-all argument and tone to determine how you interpret this statement, and we conclude that you adopt the "narrow" interpretation. This can be seen, for example, in the manner in which you analyze the poetry of the '60's. (Actually, you do not analyze it at all but merely make various assertions about it.) Here, too, it is not entirely clear what exactly you mean, but let us proceed to explain how we have taken your remarks. You criticize those

"who raised a passionate and militant cry of protest, as did some of the young black, white and Latino activist-poets of the '60's"

for their unclarity: they did not have "clear-cut" ideas about the nature of society and so were unable to

"inspire their readers onto the ... path of revolutionary struggle."

(Here, we see, that you are making political correctness -- the line and its precise effect on the political struggle -- the basic criterion for assessing their work.) From them, you pass on to the "established poets", criticizing the confusion they spread about the nature of the Viet Nam war. And finally, you attack the outright muck given us in the

"esoteric meanderings in the manner of the fascist Ezra Pound and the clerical aristocrat T.S. Eliot... and the mystical ravings of the followers of the Beats."

Summing up all of this, you conclude:

"In opposition to this unclarity, confusion and outright muck, **Struggle** declares that the writer must take the stand of the working class and participate in the most profound battles of present-day society."

**[On whether Struggle groups activist-poets
together with Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot
and on sectarianism]**

In short, your statement can be read to mean that you group not only "established poets" who perhaps only in a few "impressionistic poems and mystical howls" nevertheless by your own assessment did indeed oppose the Viet Nam war but also "activist-poets" who raised "a passionate and militant cry of protest" together with those somehow

associated with the "fascist" Pound and the "aristocrat" Eliot; and what is more that you constitute **Struggle** as a trend opposed to this grouping. (Your assertions about the poets of the '60's can be read in this way without doing any violence to the language or argument of this particular section of your editorial. All we have done is seek to discover in your text what and who were, respectively, the confusion, unclarity and outright muck that **Struggle** is opposing. There is neither anything in this section which prevents -- in fact it invites -- the particular assignment we made, nor is there any definite statement in your whole editorial which argues against it.) Independently of what you meant, there is no doubt in our minds at any rate that anyone who is not willing to give you every benefit of the doubt, among whom must number quite a few who are not already committed to the proletarian literature you advocate, will give your assertions precisely this interpretation. Thus, at the last, you have made a serious blunder. What is more, if this was indeed how you intended your assessment of the poetry of the '60's to be taken, you are committing a patently sectarian error. Far from opposing unclear protests which are militant and passionate (Oh what we would give for more of them today!), far from lumping them with reactionaries, far from constituting yourself as a trend in opposition to them, it is your duty to embrace them.

**[More on sectarianism, doctrinairism,
the political line of a work of literature,
the relationship of literature to the
actual forces and movements in society, and
the relation of action to revolutionary struggle]**

Why do you not embrace them? What leaves your statement open to -- if it does not invite -- the interpretation that you dismiss them in a sectarian manner? Apparently, it is because the activist poets did not have the correct political stand and therefore did not participate to the full in the most profound battles of society -- this despite their passionate and militant protests associated with one of the cardinal political struggles in America in the post World War II decades! Apparently, because ideas about capitalist society were not "clear-cut" enough and they

"could not inspire their readers onto the only path which offers any hope of progress, the path of revolutionary struggle"

-- despite the fact that -- if as you say these were militant and passionate cries of protests -- that these poems could hardly have not been calls to struggle, given the conditions of the '60's. Your assumption that the political and ideological

line expressed in a trend of literature or a work of literature is the basic -- not to say the sole -- criterion for evaluating has led you to take up a doctrinaire position. Even in the case of overtly political poetry and literature produced by fuzzy-headed or even wrong-headed writers and expressed without sufficient clarity -- to your tastes -- or even impressionistically -- even in such cases where literature does not espouse revolutionary politics such literature may possess substantial and positive political significance. We cannot make even a political assessment of a work of literature by extrapolating its 'line', disembodiment of its ideological content, ferreting out the ideological assumptions of its author and then measuring those against the political ideological standards of our doctrine. This is a doctrinaire approach because it leaves out of consideration the real, living relation that a work or trend of literature or a writer has to the actual forces and movements in society. It does not even bother to ask the question: is this literature a part of or associated with an oppositional current? Has it met with the approval of the masses, and if so what strivings among them is it related to, and has it perhaps even inspired them to action? (Please note that this last question does not amount to asking whether it inspired the masses onto the path of revolutionary struggle, which by the phrase

"the only path which offers any hope of progress"

you make the only legitimate and progressive call to action that literature can make.) To pass even a political judgement on literature merely by examining its line in the abstract is doctrinaire.

[Going beyond the ideological and political line of a work of literature]

As your statement is vague and as we are willing to give you the benefit of the doubt, we do not believe that you consciously intended to take a sectarian stand. Indeed, your remarks about Upton Sinclair and your willingness to open the journal to those who do not "consciously embrace" the cause shows that you have other sentiments. But sentiments and intentions are not at issue, whereas consciousness -- the clear setting out of our assumptions, the critical examination of even "obvious" starting points, the insistence that in taking our first steps into what is for us fairly uncharted territory we do not strap on seven league boots -- it is this consciousness and conscientiousness which is at stake. It is immature -- precisely unthought through and undeveloped -- to think or assume that it is enough to look at the ideological and political line of a work of literature in order to evaluate it. And it will lead to doctrinairism

and sectarianism. This is precisely not enough for we are not dealing with politics and ideology as such but with literature. (Needless to say, even dealing with political phenomena we cannot adopt a correct attitude toward them merely by analyzing the line they espouse.) It can at best offer a certain starting point. And this pertains not only to the question of how we assess the work of others -- if we did, it would be bad enough. But our assumptions about literature in general pertain not only to our attitudes toward others, they are not just pertinent to how we think about literature, they also have direct bearing on our attitude toward our own trend, and they have everything to do with what we are doing and where we are going in developing revolutionary literature. Flawed or ill-thought out or immature assumptions about "other" literature are flawed, ill-thought out and immature assumptions about all literature, including our own. They can only damage the trend which **Struggle** seeks to foster.

[No one has all the answers and perhaps not even a clear understanding of what seems to be obvious starting points]

Now, we are far from asserting that we have all the answers, and this is not the point of our criticism or our letter. Obviously, we think we are on to something. But the basic point is this: rather than dressing up assumptions -- and even prejudices -- as enshrined principles of proletarian literature, let us admit that we are in reality just beginning, that perhaps we do not have a really clear understanding of what seem to be obvious starting points. Such a self-critical attitude is healthy at all times; it is twice-again necessary as we are just starting out. And such an attitude toward our own premises, while it does not prohibit the editor of **Struggle** from being a fighter for proletarian literature and a fighter against reactionary literature -- it rather helps him to be a better fighter -- will better encourage our writers and better serve the needs of our readers than prematurely laying down "the line".

[There is no correct line on literature]

But perhaps you feel that the existence of proletarian literature over the past 100 years means that there is a well-worked out and correct line on literature? If this is the case, then please elaborate it forthwith. And, need we add, give us your authorities and your arguments so that we can arrive at our own view. But to our minds, this is not the case, and rather things stand as follows. A hundred years of proletarian literature (including in this works themselves, criticism and

theory) has not produced a homogeneous body of literature, nor has it given rise to a clear line which settles even many basic questions on this front. Even if -- which we greatly doubt -- we discover the line by examining this literature, then conclusions can be drawn only after and as a result of the investigation, they cannot be laid down before serious study is even taken up.

[Back to the relation of literature to the struggle of ideas and the class struggle]

Now we would like to return to the declaration:

"There can be no great literature which does not take full part in the struggle of ideas in society and in the class struggle which is at the root of the ideological struggle."

Leaving aside how well or ill this statement expresses a dialectical and historical materialist approach to literature, allow us to raise certain considerations which argue for a far broader interpretation of it than the one we find you adopting.

1. As we have already argued, we cannot agree to interpreting this statement to mean that the overt and explicit espousal of revolutionary politics and ideology is the sine qua non [indispensable condition] of proletarian literature. Nor can we agree that the ideological and political stand of an author, more or less embodied in his work, should be taken as the sole or the basic [criterion] for assessing a work of literature. And we are far from agreeing that the correctness of ideological [and] political line be taken as the standard for measuring all literature and assigning it a negative value according to how far it fails to measure up. "Enough said."

[The sphere of politics and ideology vs. the sphere of life and social reality]

The problem with this approach is that it one-sidedly takes literature to be the mere reflection of the politics and ideology of its author and denies or ignores the relationship of literature to life. Literature apprehends social reality in its particularity, it seizes upon the concrete rather than the abstract, the specific rather than the general, the sensuous rather than the theoretical, the intuitive rather than the logical. It is this manner of apprehending life which distinguishes art and literature: the manner in which it reflects and refracts social reality -- including its ideology and politics. Our demand on art and literature should be that it be faithful to life as it really is and in its own way. Literature is accountable first and foremost to social reality, not to political theory and ideology. We could pose this difference

between literature and politics in the following example: if you want to know the correct line for the class struggle in early 20th century Russia, read Lenin; if you want to know what the people who participated in this struggle were really like, if you want to see them, to meet them, to live with them, read Gorky. And when it comes to assessing them: hold Lenin accountable first and foremost to Marxist theory and to the demands of the class political struggle; hold Gorky accountable for the faithfulness, the veracity and the depth of his penetration into social reality.

[More on the distinction between politics and ideology, on the one hand, and art and literature on the other; on what is it that penetrates the overgrowth of official ideology; and on Balzac]

Of course, a literary work is the product of the political and ideological consciousness -- it would be more correct to say the whole world outlook, something less concentrated and explicit than politics and ideology -- of its author; but it is not a political document, not a political profession de foi of its author -- or very rarely at any rate, and for this (including in the case of Gorky) we should be thankful. Yes, an author's vision, view and judgement of life is decisively influenced by this political and ideological stand -- again, better by his world outlook -- and we can even go so far as to say that everything, each social perception, is filtered through his world outlook. His perceptions of social life will inevitably be suffused by his world outlook and his artistic products will reflect this. But there is a great deal more that goes into making an author -- and hence will be reflected in his works -- a keen observer of life, able to penetrate the overgrowth of official ideology to see things as they are, to assess men's character, to discover what is typical through the wealth of the merely accidental and contingent, etc., etc. While this great deal more is not the main thing in assessing a man's political tendency (it does of course enter into play) it plays a vital role in assessing an author as such and his literary productions. Of course, Marxism-Leninism is of greatest value in assisting an author to correctly apprehend social reality; of course, bourgeois ideology is a great hinderance to an author doing so. But we must prove this by showing how the proletarian world outlook assists literature to apprehend social reality better while the bourgeois outlook stifles it -- indeed, leads the artist and writer away from depicting social reality. And we cannot do this unless we make a distinction between politics and ideology -- on the one hand -- and art

and literature on the other. If this were not the case -- if politics and ideology, the line, strictly speaking -- were the essential thing, then we would be unable to explain phenomena such as a Balzac, who despite his reactionary political views wrote great novels of the highest merit for their content, for their accurate and truthful and critical depiction of his society. If he had felt compelled to use his novels as a sounding board for his political views -- if he did not rather use them to portray life as he saw it (not his politics as he thought them) -- he would be worthless then as now. Indeed, we could not even account for the work of Maxim Gorky, for in his political and ideological views he often wandered like a wild ass in the wilderness.

[On the criterion of truthfulness to life]

Some, no doubt, will feel that this is a non-partisan approach to literature because it dethrones ideological and political tendency from its position as the cardinal determinate of the value of the work a writer produces and the cardinal criterion of the critical evaluation of it. Some may even think it verges on being apolitical [i.e. non-political]. Well, let us not forget that our political doctrine and theory is correct precisely because it sums up and reflects the process of social reality correctly. Because it correctly reflects life -- in its own way -- our doctrine has nothing to fear -- and everything to gain -- from literature which is true to life -- in its own way -- while it is only reactionary classes who need fear such art, because it tears the veil of philistine illusions to penetrate into the essence of social reality. The demand for a literature which is faithful to life is not a-political, it is inherently committed to what is progressive, and in today's world to the proletariat. Such a literature will, therefore, find in our theory and doctrine a powerful assistance and guide, and we should strive to use our doctrine precisely in this way as a guide to action, and not convert it into an artistic and moral imperative for the writer.

Finally, if this view seems strange and heterodox, we encourage anyone under this impression to consult the letters of Marx and Engels -- orthodox testimony -- on this question. We feel that they support our position, to wit, that while the political and ideological line followed by an author and reflected in his work is of course one of the criteria for assessing it, that while we must of course promote political and ideological partisanship among authors, the basic criterion for assessing literature must remain its fidelity to life. Indeed, we suggest that you reprint the following letters in **Struggle** as a contribution to an understanding

of this issue.

[The draft letter does not include this list, which we have still not received, but instead has a blank space. After this gap, the draft letter continues:]

[On advancing beyond the political-ideological grid]

2. While literature, as it takes part in the ideological struggle, must be analyzed from the ideological and political standpoint, it is wrong to merely reduce literature to politics and ideology in order to analyze it as one does a political document. This is wrong because it denies or ignores the existence of literature as literature. Should we not strive to advance beyond the stage of plotting a book or film onto a political-ideological grid -- assigning each character a class to represent and a line to espouse -- and resting content that we have performed the task of analysis? Of course, this is a certain starting point. It still remains sufficient for dealing with films and books which, although sometimes dressed out as "fictions" and "art", are in essence political statements. And it possesses the great value of opposing and debunking the prevalent attitude and notion that literature is a-class [i.e. non-class], a-political and above ideology. But if we rest content with it then we run the danger of our denying or ignoring the specific character of literature as literature which cannot simply be analyzed in the same manner in which we analyze the -- let us say -- class composition of a given society or the political forces and trends which operate in it. If we are going to develop our work on the literary front, then we must get down to it. And as materialists, it certainly should not come as a shock to us that the precondition for serious production and criticism of literature is the study and knowledge of literature as such.

[On the analysis of literary trends as such]

Let us repeat: it is necessary to analyze the political and ideological trends which manifest themselves in literature: this distinguishes us as Marxists. But it is also necessary to pass onto the analysis of literary trends as such: only this will distinguish us as workers on the literary front. And it is absolutely imperative that we stop confusing the two: we will pass over in silence the distinction that this would earn us.

[More on trends, on impressionism, and on Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot]

Let us take several examples from the editorial.

It is all rather vague, but nevertheless one receives the distinct impression that there is something politically suspect about "impressionistic poems":

"from the established poets at best we have seen a few impressionistic poems and some mystical howls against the Viet Nam war".

As things stand with your editorial, since no analysis is given, we can only interpret this to mean that you have formed a certain prejudice against impressionism, whatever exactly you may mean by that phrase. Perhaps you would care to explain? Or take the really preposterous manner in which you deal with those who produced

"esoteric meanderings in the manner of the fascist Pound and the clerical aristocrat T.S. Eliot".

Just what exactly do you mean by "esoteric meanderings"? At a certain level of culture (i.e. low) some people will dismiss all poetry as "esoteric meanderings". Either you are making a political condemnation of poets because they wrote in the literary manner of style of either Pound or Eliot (in which case you are making an absolutely impermissible translation of what -- at this point -- can be nothing but a literary prejudice of yours into "political" terms) or you are guilty of some rather crude demagoguery by suggesting that these poets' manner and style is no good because Pound and Eliot also wrote that way and they also happened to be the worst reactionaries. (They also happened to write in English free verse -- is English free verse therefore suspect?)

[On romanticism]

To our minds if anything is suspect it is the notion that various artistic styles or trends inherently and by definition possess a certain class, political valence. Let us examine an historical case: romanticism. Generally, romanticism is understood to be a type of literature in which the heroes overcome the obstacles of an objective world which they are antagonistic toward by their inner resources, i.e., the strength and force of their personality, spirit and will. (We are not attempting a comprehensive definition -- just indicating one essential feature of what is meant by the literary category romanticism.) Originally, romanticism arose as a definite school not just of literature, but of thought generally in late 18th century Germany: there we find our romantic hero

overcoming the obstacles mundane reality placed in the way to his realization of higher ideals by flights of fancy and imagination -- in other words, our hero was generally a reflection of the petty bourgeois German philistine not up to the rigors of a real struggle against feudalism and convinced that he could escape his lamentable situation in the absolute realm of the pure spirit: poetry and religion and philosophy. From Germany, romanticism migrated to France under the bourgeois monarchy of Louis-Philippe where it served as a favorite literary vehicle of reactionaries who longed to overcome the bourgeoisification of France by a return to the more spiritual times of feudalism. Nevertheless, at the same time, it influenced one of the great critical realists, Stendhal, and the "socialist" Shelley. And, at last, in 1934 we find Maxim Gorky advocating revolutionary romanticism which he saw as "most beneficial in promoting a revolutionary attitude toward reality". Please forgive the lecture, but we offer this as food for thought. For our example indicates how, while literature is not above class, the trends and styles of literature cannot be assumed to belong by nature to one class or another, but can (not always, but we only sought to demonstrate the possibility) be seized upon by different classes and be given different meanings.

[Literary trends don't necessarily have a political, ideological or class specific gravity]

We suggest, therefore, that instead of assuming that every literary trend and style necessarily and by nature has a specific political gravity -- including the "bourgeois" trends which are apt (especially if arose [in the] 20th century) to be treated as if they bore the mark of Cain -- we would do better to analyze these literary trends as they have appeared and developed in the history of literature itself and what actual relations they have had (and may still be adopted to have) to politics and ideology. Before that is done, it is impossible to express a mature judgement, and the field will remain open to prejudice. And unless we admit this -- not too big a demand to make of historical materialists, certainly -- we are not only in for some embarrassing blunders by our critics, but we are without proper warrant restricting the range of our new writers, who will profit far more, we think, from a literary and critical knowledge of these things than from a "political" and superficial dismissal of them. <>