

The Workers' Advocate

Supplement



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What kind of movement is Jesse Jackson building?

The strong showing of the Jackson campaign in the Democratic primaries says something about the political climate. His success is to a large part based on his appeal to the discontented and down-trodden.

Jackson says he is for the little fish against the big barracudas. This has won a response among workers, poor people, blacks, and other oppressed nationalities. This is a sign of the depths of feeling against the corporations and their plant closings and take backs. It's a sign of resentment at the cutbacks, neglect and racist oppression on the part of the government. It's a sign that the masses are sick and tired of Reaganism and its Democratic Party imitations.

The fact that a black man has won primaries and caucuses from the Deep South to Michigan and Vermont also says something. Among some blacks and others the fact that a black candidate has been doing so well has generated interest and even

enthusiasm. The votes for Jackson among the working people in general is a message of rejection of the knee-jerk bigotry preached by the ruling class.

These things have their significance. At the same time, it must be kept in mind just who Jesse Jackson is and what his campaign stands for. Jackson is a big-time politician of the Democratic Party, a party of the big barracudas just like the Republican Party. His campaign platform is not for workers' struggle. It is not for militant mass action against racism and imperialism. It's a pie-in-the-sky platform, embroidered with the election-year promises that the liberal Democrats have been offering up since the days of Roosevelt.

No class conscious worker, no anti-racist fighter, no revolutionary-minded person can afford to close his or her eyes to these realities of the Jackson campaign.

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More news from Nicaragua

The June issue of the **Workers' Advocate** carried a front page article "Solidarity with the Nicaraguan workers' movement" and articles on the construction workers strike, the Arias plan, and continued U.S. aggression against Nicaragua.

This issue of the **Supplement** contains articles from **Prensa Proletaria**, voice of the Marxist-Leninist Party of Nicaragua, (MAP-ML), on the strike movement and the dangers of the Arias plan.

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Background to the Polish strikes
IT IS CAPITALIST 'MARKET SOCIALISM' WHICH IS RUINING THE POLISH WORKERS

The new rich quickly adopt the life-style of the European upper crust. In winter they ski in the Alps. In summer they loll on the Riviera. They drive BMW's and wear jewelry by Gucci. Their children attend special private schools. Their provisions are purchased at specialty stores selling imported goods. They thumb their noses at the workers, who are being hit by rising prices, over-work and layoffs.

Sound familiar? Does it sound like the new millionaires on Wall Street, yucking it up while workers and poor people suffer under the Reaganite capitalist offensive? Actually this is also the life-style of the new wealthy in Poland.

This is the other side of the same picture that has meant the growing poverty of the Polish workers. And it is capitalism which is responsible for this. Today's growing class inequality in Poland is being accelerated by the very same Western-style economic reforms that the U.S. government and media are so enthusiastic about.

They tell us that Poland is a socialist society which needs capitalism to survive. But that is a

lie. Poland is already a capitalist country, but a state capitalist one run by revisionists who make a mockery of Marxism. This means that a wealthy class of bureaucrats and managers rule, running most of the economy as one huge corporation. At the same time, large sections of the economy, such as agriculture, are in private hands.

Polish state capitalism has long been gripped by severe economic crisis, and the response of the bureaucrats in power has been a drive towards more typically capitalist structures. The capitalist reforms carried out by the Jaruzelski government will push Poland even faster in this direction. But they will not solve Poland's economic problems; they will only increase the burden on the workers while enriching the capitalists, bureaucrats and foreign bankers.

The strikes this spring represent an attempt by the workers to defend themselves in the face of a harsh economic offensive.

Reforms to Extend 'Market Socialism'

A new package of capitalist reforms was adopted this last winter by the Jaruzelski regime.

Poland owes over \$30 billion to Western banks, and the International Monetary Fund has been pushing Jaruzelski to impose ever deeper austerity on the Polish masses in order to make payments on the loans. The IMF and Western imperialism as a whole are among the main forces pushing for stepped-up capitalist reforms in Poland.

* A major part of the new reforms is breakup of the national banking system. The effect of this will be to allow room for private finance capital to grow and play a much greater role in the economy--lending to private enterprises, borrowing from foreign banks, trading in foreign currencies, etc.

* Another important step is to require state-owned enterprises to declare bankruptcy and close up shop if they operate at a loss. This will mean wider unemployment, as some of the largest enterprises, such as the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk, do not currently make a profit.

* The government is slashing government subsidies in public housing and transportation and abolishing some rent control. This move is responsible for much of the recent surge in prices. The government is also slashing funds for public institutions such as schools, hospitals, etc.

* How are workers supposed to keep up with

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rising prices? They aren't. The reforms also stipulate wage controls. Wage raises are to be linked only to productivity gains, so that workers must first sweat blood before they can gain an extra few cents an hour in the attempt to make up for inflation.

* But don't worry, the Polish bourgeoisie has come up with a marvelous idea for saving the workers from poverty. Now workers will be eligible to buy shares of stock in the company they work for! We all know what a wonderful safety net this has been for saving American workers from the effects of rising prices and unemployment.

'Solidarity' Leaders Support the Capitalist Reforms

Many Polish workers have in the recent past looked to the Solidarity trade union as the opposition to the government's austerity. This is linked to the fact that Solidarity emerged in 1980 out of that year's massive strike wave against price hikes.

The top leaders of Solidarity, however, were never loyal to the workers' interests. They hooked up with Western imperialism and were close to the Catholic church hierarchy--which is a defender of capitalism, not the working class. The Solidarity leaders were not interested in pursuing the workers' struggle but in getting a share of power from the revisionist bureaucrats.

This has become more and more apparent. Increasingly the Solidarity leaders have given up talking much about workers' rights. They are among the foremost advocates of "marketization"--of opening up free capitalist markets in all spheres of the economy. In 1985 Solidarity leaders adopted a program calling for a thoroughgoing market economy with a stock market and private ownership of industry.

And they are fully aware that this means greater inequality and exploitation. The Solidarity leaders' stand has become so extreme that last year Ryszard Bugaj, one of their key advisers from 1981, complained that the underground Solidarity press was supporting such pro-market positions that one would never know it was a union press "if not for the union bug at the top!"

With this stand, the Solidarity leaders could not oppose Jaruzelski's reform program. And they aren't. Presently they are trying to work out a deal with Jaruzelski in which they will help implement the austerity measures if Jaruzelski accepts them as a partner in government policy making. And this is what Solidarity tried to raise in the

recent strike wave. At the same time, they oppose strikes and basic economic demands of the workers, such as cost-of-living adjustments. They see these things as sabotaging the move toward greater "marketization".

The church leadership also plays the same role. And the Jaruzelski government has been agreeing to give it a role in the policy-making process. So far they have been reluctant to make a place for Solidarity, since it is so closely tied in workers' minds with the strike struggle. But there are increasing signs of government moves towards opening ties with Solidarity leaders like Lech Walesa and Geremek.

In short, the Solidarity leaders and the Catholic Church are completely hypocritical in speaking for the workers. They are, in essence, the political representatives of private capitalist interests who merely want to use the workers' struggle as a means to pressure for power sharing.

The Enemy is Capitalism

Thus a social pact among the capitalist elite--the revisionist bureaucrats, the church and Solidarity leaders--is in the making. In the short term, Polish workers may despair when they realize the treachery of those who they have placed hopes in. But this situation may well help the workers break out of the pro-capitalist influences of Solidarity and the church. With the betrayal of Solidarity becoming more open than ever, the workers will have to look for a better alternative.

That alternative is an independent workers' movement; one that has the perspective of fighting towards proletarian socialism.

The building of such a movement requires, above all, recognition that the problems of Polish workers come not from socialism, but from capitalism. Their problems come from a state capitalist regime which merely parades as workers' rule. Their problems come from the demands of the IMF, the tool of the capitalist Western banks, which demands harsh austerity and capitalist reforms to pay off Poland's huge debt burden. And their problems come from the pressure of private capital inside Poland, which wants room to grow further by leaning heavier on workers' backs.

The Polish workers will have to overcome the prejudices against socialism and communism that have been created by the criminal betrayal of the false communists. There will be more twists and turns in this tortuous road, but this is the only road out of capitalist and revisionist misery. <>

A GLIMPSE AT WHAT THE NICARAGUAN CONSTRUCTION WORKERS ARE FIGHTING ABOUT

The April '88 issue of **Prensa Proletaria**, voice of the Marxist-Leninist Party of Nicaragua (MAP-ML), carried an article describing the 1988 "Catalog of Consolidated Norms" that the Sandinistas wish to impose on the construction workers to replace the 1983 version.

It points out that the document claims the current wage of a construction worker is 3,000 cordobas. It says that "the workers cannot believe it, because it is so high". It has nothing to do with what they actually earn and is equal to "the monthly salary of six workers who earn minimum wage".

What are the actual wage rates given in the 1988 Catalog?

It puts skilled workers, the so-called "officials" (bricklayers, carpenters and assemblers), at scale 8 where the wage is 41 cordobas and 21 centavos per day.

The other construction workers are at scale 4, with 26 cordobas and 8 centavos per day. This is just barely above the absolute minimum wage.

It is not just **Prensa Proletaria** which calls this a starvation wage. **Barricada International** has the gall to denounce the construction workers as labor aristocrats (do they dare compare how these workers live and how the Sandinista officials or the "patriotic bourgeoisie" live?), and then in the same article admits that:

"Since the economic reform was decreed, ...a family of six with two working members on the lowest rungs of the scale **finds it difficult to survive.**"

(May 5, 1988, p. 17, emphasis added)

The unskilled construction workers are at these lowest rungs, while the skilled ones aren't too much better.

Comparing 1983 and 1988 Wages

Of course, what a cordoba buys isn't too familiar for an American reader. But **Prensa Proletaria** also gives comparisons to previous construction worker wages.

"In 1983 you had to carry almost six bags of cement to be able to buy a pop. Today, you have to carry 100 bags for the same pop!

"Under the 1983 Catalog, a helper who loaded, moved, and unloaded sand less than 20 meters received 8 cordobas and 14 centavos per cubic meter of sand. In the present Catalog, he earns 3 cor-

dobas and 26 centavos. At the relative prices, this worker in 1983 could buy a little over five pops per cubic meter of sand. Today he must move 3 cubic meters for **ONE** pop!

"In the case of the 'officials', the pay in 1983 was 83 centavos per block of cement laid down. Today it pays 19 centavos,"

Furthermore, the article says the 1988 Catalog removes the separate compensation for work tools (scaffolds, levellers, sights and knives). Previously, in the 1983 Catalog, the tools were paid for in addition to the basic wage.

Job Combination

The Catalog also introduces crushing job combination. **Prensa Proletaria** points out:

"The consolidation considers as one single operation what is really the sum of many. So the management, in grouping many activities into one, is refusing to properly pay those workers who have been rooked by the consolidation.

"To comply 100% with the norms set by the Ministry of construction, the workers have to work 10-12 hours a day, without interruption, to accomplish work that only counts as eight hours."

Inflation

The Catalog also doesn't protect the workers from the rampant inflation triple digit inflation in Nicaragua. The article points out:

"We can increase the pay per block of cement laid down to one cordoba. At this time, if the 'official' lays down 40 blocks, he will earn one pound of meat. But if the price of meat rises to 100 cordobas per pound, the 'official' must lay down, not forty, but 100 blocks.

"This is the famous struggle between the chained ox (wages) and the free tiger (prices)."

The article says:

"The Catalog keeps the wages down, while the prices take off. It's necessary to have a mechanism that will keep adjusting the rates in the Catalog in accordance with the increase in the prices." <<

From the Nicaraguan Workers' Press:
SOME BASIC CRITERIA ON THE STRIKE AS AN INSTRUMENT OF STRUGGLE

From the April 1988 issue of **Prensa Proletaria**, voice of the Marxist-Leninist Party of Nicaragua (MAP-ML). Translated by the **Workers' Advocate** staff.

Under the present conditions, the strike not only is a **mechanism of the rights** of the workers' movement, but an irreplaceable **mechanism of deeds**, given the character of the government's crisis policy, which increases the superexploitation of the workforce and therefore demands firm reply and resistance by the workers' movement.

Throughout almost nine years of power of the Sandinista petty bourgeoisie (already the explicit political expression of the so-called patriotic bourgeoisie), the administrative and legal petitions have been becoming exhausted, establishing the vital necessity of more advanced expressions of the workers' demands.

This mechanism has to be well handled, organized, taken up consciously by the workers' movement, and the Party must do the maximum to achieve an organized and class handling of the strike. Particular attention of the workers' movement is the struggle against the manipulations of the right-wing forces, interested in mounting on the back of the legitimate demands of the workers, but for the purpose of disorganizing them and utilizing them for their counterrevolutionary ends.

For the Marxist-Leninists, the workers' strikes directed against the effects of the economic policy of the Sandinista government, strikes which demand better wages, reduction of work standards and, in the most advanced way, oppose the class logic of the economic policy of the Sandinista government, **are objectively revolutionary**. The party must work hard so that in the future they may be **subjectively revolutionary**.

MAP-ML, therefore, supports every strike that confronts this class logic in the economic and labor policies, and we carry out unity in action with the forces that are moving in this same direction, to the point that at no time do we renounce vehemently opposing the direction that Sandinism and COSEPism [COSEP is the Superior Council of Private Enterprise, the organization of the top capitalists] exercise or may exercise over the workers' movement, nor do we renounce the struggle against the opportunist and right-wing manipulations which, in the middle of serious con-

flicts, normally break out when the proletariat is weak or not very clear on its objectives.

By the character of the monetary reform and the whole of the Sandinista government's crisis policy, the class confrontation was unleashed, since the bourgeoisie as much as Sandinism need to exasperate the workers' movement to the maximum in order to later force it to negotiate in disadvantageous conditions. This is the political moment in which the bourgeoisie and Sandinism would take the opportunity to conclude a negotiation, an explicit social pact in which the workers' movement, in a precarious situation, would make deep and enormous concessions in exchange for light concessions from the bourgeoisie and Sandinism. The government's package of economic measures has this political-economic objective.

The conditions for opening the class consciousness of the workers, the organizing experiences that the strike movements leave behind, generate conditions favorable for agitation and for improving the Party's links with the workers' movement. We have the obligation to accompany and to put ourselves in the front of the workers' struggles, agitating in the struggle for demands and politicizing these struggles so that the workers can be oriented towards the private bosses and the state bosses, as two opponents to confront every time necessary in the daily struggles.

We must fight firmly to imbue the strike movement with the stamp of class independence against the state and the forces of the so-called private enterprise.

Our strategy is to stimulate the political and trade union rupture of these worker nucleuses with the bosses', Sandinistas' and COSEP leaderships, showing that none of them can represent the workers' interests, but all respond, in the final analysis, to the same class logic.

Therefore, the Marxist-Leninist Party of Nicaragua and Frente Obrero [trade union center associated with the MLPN] will insist on the plan of struggle against the monetary reform, will continue agitating in favor of unity of action, and politicizing the strike movement in opposition to the right opportunist manipulation.

We must raise the class character of the strike movement of the workers, firmly defending its independence in regard to the state of the so-called patriotic bourgeoisie and in regard to the bourgeois forces in their entirety. <>

The Nicaraguan Workers Press on the Trade Unions

From **Prensa Proletaria**, voice of the Marxist-Leninist Party of Nicaragua (MAP-ML), April 1988, where it appeared under the title "The CPT and the Frente Obrero". The CPT is the trade union coalition of the right-wing and revisionist unions, with its main unions being revisionist unions. Frente Obrero is the union center of the MLPN. These are the two poles that lie outside the official Sandinista unions. The article has been translated by the **Workers' Advocate** staff.

The Permanent Congress of Toilers (CPT) has refused to accept the participation in this trade union conglomeration of Frente Obrero (Workers Front or FO), the trade union federation led by the Marxist-Leninist Party.

Since its founding in 1974, Frente Obrero has been waging a broad and profound struggle in the heart of the workers' movement and has been clear in declaring its socialist perspective and its adherence to Marxism-Leninism.

Frente Obrero was the only organization expelled from the [body that became the] State Council before the State Council, which emerged after 1979, was set up.

FO was accused of being an ultra-leftist organization and of being "sympathetic to Mao Zedong" and suffered other political-ideological "attacks" in one of the most ferocious campaigns launched in late 1979 and early 1980 against the workers' movement.

At that time, the CST, the ATC, the CAUS, the CTN, the CGT and the CUS applauded the use of Sandinista mobs, the closing of the daily paper **El Pueblo**, the campaigns on the radio and television and in the press, and the imprisoning of over 200 activists and leaders linked to MAP-ML and Frente Obrero. [**El Pueblo** is a revolutionary newspaper associated with the MLPN. The initials refer to the various labor federations in Nicaragua. The CST is the Sandinista union center. The ATC is the Sandinista peasant organization. The CAUS is the revisionist Communist Party's union center. The CTN is the Catholic union. The CGT is the revisionist Socialist Party's union center. And CUS is the pro-imperialist AFL-CIO-style union center.]

All these trade union centrals applauded the repression against Frente Obrero.

Hard work has been necessary to rebuild the political work of MAP-ML and the trade union work of Frente Obrero, [which has been] in

defense of a line of class independence of the proletariat, as much in defiance of the private bosses as in defiance of the Sandinista government.

MAP-ML and Frente Obrero represent the proletarian line in the face of the bourgeoisie and the Sandinista petty bourgeoisie.

This is the reason why CUS, CTN, CAUS, CGT have refused to have unity in action with Frente Obrero, since these union centrals historically have played games with the bosses, be they private or state.

Thus, the workers' movement apparently would be in a dilemma: must it choose between the union forces that support the state bosses (such as the CST, the ATC) or the forces that support the private bosses and COSEP (such as CUS, CTN, CAUS and CGT)? [COSEP is the Superior Council of Private Enterprise, an organization of the top capitalists.]

Obviously, the workers' movement can not resign itself to choosing only between two yokes: it has to liberate itself from every boss' yoke. The CPT, by agreeing to amalgamate itself with [the grouping of] fourteen rightist-opportunist parties, has exposed its real political objective. Its role is, on the base of the justness, correctness, and revolutionariness of the workers' struggle for demands of the workers, to smuggle in political slogans which serve the rightist forces to achieve a social base and in that case, divert the struggle towards their counterrevolutionary plans.

Thus, the CPT is converting itself into a trade union tail of the fourteen rightist-opportunist political parties, just as the CST is the union tail of the Sandinista petty bourgeoisie, representing the so-called patriotic bourgeoisie.

There are two bosses' forces fighting for influence and hegemony on the working class--the immense revolutionary force which comprises the Nicaraguan proletariat and the workers' movement in general.

The working class must liberate itself from the two bosses' trends and build its own class force, independent of Sandinism and of COSEPism.

It is possible to expel both from the workers' movement: to repudiate the bosses dressed up as Sandinista revolutionaries and to expel the bosses who hide under the cloaks of the fourteen rightist-opportunist political parties.

Let the workers' struggle for demands gather together only the genuine forces of the workers and the class struggle!

Let a single movement grow in the struggle, a

real class current that successfully carries out its just struggles, in order to be in a position to confront the iron labor policy and anti-worker repression of the Sandinista government and to confront the maneuvers and manipulations of the reactionary forces tied to COSEPism and the Coordinadora. [The "Democratic Coordinator" is a grouping of the pro-contra, right-wing opposition.]

In particular, the CPT must encourage more popular support for the workers' demands and must

remove the manipulation of the rightist-opportunist forces to whom it is giving opportunity.

The [sectarianism] of the CPT against the left (refusing unity in action with Frente Obrero and approaching the right) must be eliminated. The struggle for demands must be revolutionary and therefore must take up those demands confronting both the Sandinista bosses and the capitalist bosses. <>

**From the Nicaraguan Workers' Press:
WORKERS: SOMOCISM HAS RISEN AGAIN...
THE STRUGGLE IS NOT OVER**

Below is the lead article from the April 1988 issue of **Prensa Proletaria**, voice of the Marxist-Leninist Party of Nicaragua (formerly MAP-ML). In the early days after the revolution, in accordance with the Puntarenas agreements, the Sandinistas ruled jointly with the bourgeoisie and jointly broke unions and suppressed the workers. The negotiations under the Arias plan aim at restoring this coalition in a new form.

The FSLN has made a turn in the country and in our own history. It is going in reverse and arriving, after a long and costly journey, at the original point of departure.

Now, according to this "vanguard" [the Sandinista leadership], the result is that the class forces hit by the popular insurrection, the forces that enslaved us for more than 45 years, the forces that exploited, oppressed, alienated, and prostituted us, are appearing as liberators, emancipators.

Sandinism arrived in 1988 at the southern frontier [in Sapoá, for negotiations]--arriving from Managua-- when after July 19, 1979, it had arrived in Managua **from** the southern frontier. We [the Nicaraguan toilers] are finishing where we started, with the difference that now we are fewer, not only because thousands have fallen these nine years, giving their lives to sustain a revolutionary possibility, but also because a few were won over by the forces of restoration. If the operation of taking the National Palace in 1978 had the slogan "Death to Somocism," the slogan of Sapoá should have been "Long Live Somocism."

And, in effect, Somocism has revived. The bourgeois Somocista guard could survive the insurrection, disbanding itself in a cowardly way in

the last days before July 19, 1979. This cowardly way of dealing with the revolution, throwing away rifles and uniforms, resulted in the security of life for this repressive, reactionary force. For imperialism, and for the bourgeois reaction, it was not difficult to reconstruct it, rearm it, give it new rifles, uniforms, and new salaries. The Somocist guard, an appendage of imperialism, could rebuild itself like salamanders [lizards] -- which lose their tails, but not their heads, in order to save their lives.

The FSLN took as a trophy the tail of the salamander, to exhibit it as proof that the salamander was dead, that the workers and peasants were in power. Until the salamander began to wreak havoc again.

The FSLN made it so that the workers and peasants thought it would be enough to have the salamander's tail as a trophy. The FSLN tried to make these genuinely revolutionary forces think that the bourgeoisie was defeated, that socialism was being built, that we had entered the land of "milk and honey", as they say in their slogans.

If the enemy were liquidated, where did the workers' demands come from, the taking of factories at the end of 1979 and beginning of 1980? Where did these peasant land seizures come from in the middle of 1980? These were ultra-left forces, Maoist forces, obscure forces who were playing the game of imperialism, according to the Sandinistas. The FSLN forcibly repressed the forces of the left in such a brutal way that the part of the left [MAP/ML], valiant, which did not give up the banners of proletarian revolution, was strategically weakened. Another part [the revisionist parties such as the pro-Soviet "Communist" Party and the more Eurocommunist-style "Socialist" Party], owing to its vacillations and opportunist

past, could not find any other solution than to seek political alliances with retarding backwards forces, or at least forces that were decelerating the revolution. We are now seeing the result: some are fighting like Leonidas in the Thermopylae [mountain pass in Greece where, in 480 B.C., led by Leonidas who died in the battle, a handful of Spartans held off the vast forces of the Persian empire]. Others are fighting "for the vital interests of the country", advocating that the salamander occupy the space that the people cleared with their blood, sweat and tears. It is a counterrevolution.

A revolution in reverse, like the force of the tides, which instead of pushing outward, abuses from the inside. The heroes became the villains, and the villains, the heroes. With a very interesting particular characteristic: the elements of the bourgeoisie which made political alliances with the FSLN for its taking of power, which exercised power alongside Sandinism at the base of this alliance (as chiefs of militias, as presidents of the central bank, as magistrates) became chiefs in the [contra] force which pressured the FSLN with arms not to make agreements with the workers and peasants, [not to join together with the toilers] for the cause of the proletarian revolution in Nicaragua. These are the same personages with which the FSLN has realized a new alliance/pact at Sapoa, signing a political compromise to continue repressing even further the worker-peasant forces of the revolution in Nicaragua, in exchange for the acknowledgment that, in their turn, the counterrevolutionary forces have given the Sandinista government its legitimacy. A new pact, similar to the one of Puntarenas, Costa Rica, in 1979, through which Sandinista third partyism [Ortega's third faction of the FSLN that was the most active section of the Sandinistas in building an alliance with the bourgeois opposition, and which came to dominate the FSLN from this time on] initiated its campaign of liquidation of the revolutionary forces of the workers and peasants.

While on March 22, in front of MITRAB [the Labor Ministry], the declassified "turbas" of the CST tried to provoke and assault the brave construction strikers, and prepared their 1,000 tricks for not answering the demands of the striking workers, the government was dialoging, negotiating with, and giving concessions to resurrected Somocism. This will be the model which will take our history in reverse. The contra leaders will return and they will accuse as rebels, extremists, enemies of peace, provocateurs, and agents of imperialism, the workers who continue to try to lift their faces from the ground and to reclaim, with class firmness, their rights, demands, daily struggles, and more. Sandinism, as at the end of '79 and begin-

ning of '80, will not give any other solution except to join up with these forces. [Sandinism ruled in coalition with these forces at that time.] It already has; it has been doing it for nine years under the cover of revolution, telling the super-exploited workers, poorly fed, in rags, without their own political rights, that this is the society they fought for in their program, that this is the socialist society that they instinctively strive for. Meanwhile, Pellas [Nicaraguan millionaire who lives in Miami while the Sandinistas send him profits from his Nicaraguan enterprises] drinks the workers' sweat, transformed into dollars in Miami. The now-named "Dr. Calero", Mister Coca-cola, a genocidal murderer whom Somoza himself held dear, will go campaigning for the National Dialogue mounted by Sandinism, to decide democratically, by vote of the majority, how to grab hold of the workers to make them produce more, [how to make them] accept this as their definitive destiny, and the Sandinista state and the private owners will "divide up their clothes." -- Workers, Somocism has revived! The struggle is not over.

We must not be content with getting the tail, in the next few battles, of the salamander. We must destroy the salamander.

The road of this new struggle is long and difficult. It is costly as well. But it is a life-and-death question, because one cannot live, as the priests are fond of saying, with the wolf lying down next to the lamb.

Today, more than ever, the workers' hands must take up the class banners more firmly, with more decision, with more energy. Today, more than ever, we must all push to get our rights. To cut at this society like the sculptor does the stone, until we have given it the form and the content of the workers and peasants. Strengthen the unions and political organizations of the workers. Don't give an inch in the struggles and advance as much as possible in the face of the compromises which the Sandinistas and contras keep signing against the workers.

Make demands to the government in the wage struggle, for the abolition of the Labor Code, for the workers' freedom of expression, in union organization and mobilization, in the workplace, and for political rights of the workers, and in the agrarian reform, all the gains which are now in question.

We must build up from small to big the worker-peasant forces of the Nicaraguan revolution. We must raise the workers' option in the revolution.

Sapoa has demonstrated what Sandinism could not avoid admitting: Only the workers and peasants will go all the way to the end. Only their organized force will win the triumph. <>

**On the recent right-wing coup attempt in Guatemala:
DEMOCRACY REMAINS A DEAD LETTER IN GUATEMALA**

The Reagan administration loves to brag about how it is allegedly helping to bring democracy to Central America. Why has Reagan launched the dirty contra war against Nicaragua? For "democracy." Why is the U.S. sending hundreds of millions of dollars to the death-squad regimes in El Salvador and Honduras? For "democracy", of course!

Likewise for Guatemala. Ever since the Cerezo regime came to power in 1986, the Reaganites have been crowing about "democratization" in Guatemala. After all, the Christian-Democrat Cerezo was the first civilian ruler in Guatemala after three decades of almost continuous military dictatorship. Cerezo promised to restore "human rights" and curb the military and death squads who killed or "disappeared" tens of thousands of government opponents in the years of military rule.

But the events of the past month and a half have shown once again that talk of democracy in Guatemala is a fraud. Cerezo is just a figurehead for the continuing reign of terror by the exploiters. Freedom depends on which class rules. As long as the pro-U.S. exploiters are in power, whether in uniform or out, the masses will remain bleeding and oppressed.

Cerezo Supports the Generals

In May a section of the armed forces, disgruntled by some of Cerezo's policies, attempted to bring him down in a coup. From this one might imagine that Cerezo was taking serious measures against the military. Far from it. In fact Cerezo has given the military a free hand to continue to run roughshod over the masses.

Under Cerezo the army has continued its war of murder and terror against the anti-government masses. In Cerezo's first year in power an estimated 700 people were assassinated. Today the rate of murder and "disappearances" is higher than it was in the last year of military rule.

Cerezo's government has whitewashed the terror of the army. It portrays the wave of assassinations as simply a rise in "common crime". As well, the army was allowed to implement a self-amnesty for its savagery committed before 1986. Some of the most notorious military officers have even been elevated to key government posts.

What Was Behind the Coup Attempt?

But despite Cerezo's support for the military, a section of the army was upset with him. There were differences over how best to crush the strikes, protests and armed anti-government forces. Cerezo agreed with the military that repression was needed. But he wanted to combine this with efforts to get the reformists in the anti-government opposition to reconcile with the regime through negotiations.

To this end four members of the reformist opposition group, the United Representation of the Guatemalan Opposition (RUOG), were allowed to return from exile for a visit on April 18. The reformists refused to apply for amnesty, as Cerezo wanted, but Cerezo finally agreed to let them back anyway. But, trying to please the ultra-fascist officers, Cerezo changed his mind. Thus when the RUOG members landed in Guatemala City, they were met by 400 police and arrested. Under pressure of mass protest, the RUOG members were soon released, staying a week in Guatemala.

The RUOG visit was the spark that set off the revolt in the military. On May 11 troops from two battalions marched on the capital, Guatemala City. The attempted coup quickly collapsed, however, when army units in the capital failed to join the revolt.

Despite the coup attempt, Cerezo's "civilian" government at first declared there would be no punishment for the mutinous officers. Eventually, however, a few of them were arrested. After all, they had expressed the desire to overthrow the military command as well as Cerezo.

Another Exposure of the Arias Plan

RUOG visited Guatemala as a part of the Arias plan. It regarded the visit as a success. But what did it actually show? They suffered arrest at the airport, and later a coup attempt broke out against the government. This fiasco came straight from the Arias peace plan. It calls on the people to rely on the goodwill of the pro-U.S. regimes to bring about democracy and prosperity.

RUOG's brief visit to Guatemala didn't mark any change in the situation in Guatemala. The brutal repression of the masses continues. Even reformist conciliators like RUOG are subject to

repression at the regime's whim.

Meanwhile the murderous right wing remains free to terrorize the masses and even try and topple Cerezo.

The Masses Need Revolution

The Arias plan can't reconcile the interests of the oppressor and the oppressed. The liberation of the working people of Guatemala can only be won through the revolutionary overthrow of the regime of the exploiters and the smashing of the armed forces of repression. <>

WORLD IN STRUGGLE

STRIKE WAVE IN NIGERIA

A big strike wave rolled through Nigeria in late April. The strikes began as a protest against an increase in fuel prices. This was imposed by the capitalist government to meet austerity demands of the International Monetary Fund, the club of the world's imperialist bankers.

After security forces killed several strikers in the city of Jos, the movement grew further, fueled by outrage against government brutality. On April 18 five industrial unions struck to protest the killings. Students also joined the protests, and the government closed schools and universities to try and quash the protests.

On April 24 the government banned all further demonstrations. Nonetheless on April 30 transport workers in and around the capital city, Lagos, went on strike and disrupted traffic. <>

Despite reformist electoral plans of social-democratic SP and revisionist CP INDUSTRIAL STRIKES IN FRANCE

Industrial workers in France have waged several strikes this spring. They took place despite the fears of the reformist Socialist and Communist Parties that the strikes would adversely affect their fortunes in the French presidential elections.

Two truck plants owned by Chausson (jointly owned by Peugeot and Renault) were shut down by a strike of 1,500 workers for five weeks. The

workers won a pay raise and bonus.

Four thousand aircraft workers went on strike at three plants of SNECMA, the state-owned aircraft engine maker. Tools were also put down by the 5,000 workers producing Michelin tires in Clermont-Ferrand.

At the end of May SNECMA threatened to divert production to its partner, General Electric of the U.S. The strike was ended under this pressure, but the workers are expected to continue random one- or two-hour work stoppages. <>

BRITISH SEAMEN VOW TO CARRY ON STRIKE

Dover, Britain. At a mass meeting in late May 1,000 seamen employed by P&O European Ferry Co. vowed to continue their fifteen-week-old strike. Eight hundred and fifty of the seamen have been fired by P&O for strike activities. The ferry workers demanded that P&O reverse the mass firings before they will end their strike. At the same time they repeated their demand that P&O give up its plan to change working hours and impose a 20% wage cut.

A Slap in the Face to the Labor Bureaucrats

The workers' decision to continue the strike was a slap in the face to their trade union leaders, who have given up on the strike. But the seamen have received tremendous solidarity from other workers and want to push ahead their fight.

In the past few months of the strike a number of sympathy strikes have been called by other seamen throughout Britain. At some times these have included almost all of the country's 22,000 ferry workers. Truck drivers from many countries have helped block ferry ports in France and Belgium, as well as in England, in support of the strike. Militant workers from all over Britain have joined the seamen's main picket line in Dover and helped organize soup kitchens and raise financial aid.

The British government has outlawed secondary strikes and boycotts, however, and so came down hard on the solidarity movement. Margaret Thatcher's hatchet men seized the buildings and treasury of the seamen's union. To appease Thatcher the union bureaucrats called off the secondary strikes and recommended that the seamen return to work. And at the end of May the union leaders agreed to stop mass picketing at P&O itself.

As an alternative to the strike the union leaders are promoting a "corporate campaign" involving a boycott of P&O and gathering public support for Sealink, another ferry company that is the major corporate competitor of P&O.

But the seamen themselves have not been intimidated by Thatcherite repression. After voting to continue the strike they went en masse to the union's biennial conference, invaded the bureaucrats' meeting hall, and forced a debate on the issue of continuing the strike. <>

In South Korea: PROTESTS MARK EIGHTH ANNIVERSARY OF KWANGJU REBELLION

Violent protests rocked South Korea in May as demonstrators commemorated the eighth anniversary of the Kwangju uprising. These protests were the largest since last summer, when the Chun dictatorship was forced to promise democratization.

Since then elections have been held, but the ruling party of the military remains in power. Roh Tae Woo, another general, is now in the presidential seat. The basic grievances of the South Korean masses--the lack of workers' rights, police repression, military domination by U.S. imperialism, and the lack of ties with the northern part of

Korea--remain the same.

Huge Protests

The protests began on May 15, when a student named Cho Sung Man committed suicide as a protest against the U.S. and South Korean governments. Cho demanded the release of political prisoners and the reunification of Korea. His death sparked demonstrations in Seoul and some provincial cities on May 16. Hundreds of students fought riot police with rocks and firebombs.

May 18 is the day marking the Kwangju uprising of 1980. On that day there were thousands of protests throughout South Korea. Demonstrators denounced the government of Roh Tae Woo, who helped crush the Kwangju rebellion as an army general.

Then on May 19 a huge funeral march, from Seoul to Kwangju, was held in honor of Cho Sung Man. Tens of thousands of participants fought police for control of the main shopping area in Seoul as they shouted "Down with the military dictatorship!" and "Drive out the Yankees!" They sang anti-American songs and chanted "Execute Roh Tae Woo". In Kwangju 100,000 people surged into the central district and clashed with police.

Attack on U.S. Embassy

On May 20 hundreds of activists surrounded the U.S. embassy in Seoul. The protesters scaled the walls of the embassy and hurled homemade bombs. They had signs saying "Drive out America, culprit of the Kwangju massacre" and shouted "Yankee go home!"

Attacks have also been mounted against other U.S. institutions. At the end of the month 30 students firebombed a Seoul bank jointly run by the Bank of America and South Korean companies.

At the end of May Roh Tae Woo ordered a new crackdown on all demonstrations on the pretext of security for the Olympics. On the 27th 7,000 riot police attacked some 3,000 demonstrators in Seoul.

The militant protests this May show that the Korean masses are not about to lie down merely because the general in charge has been put there through elections. They are continuing their fight for thoroughgoing changes. <>

ANTI-RACIST NEWS

Below are news briefs from the anti-racist struggle that didn't make it into the June 1 **Workers' Advocate** due to lack of space.

**PROTEST AGAINST KKK RALLY
IN WEST VIRGINIA**

About 400 people came out to protest a Ku Klux Klan march in Fayetteville, West Virginia on April 17. The 20 or so hooded Klansmen were under heavy police guard as they marched around the town hall. Coal miners, anti-racist activists, and other local residents lined the march route and jeered at the racists.

Over the past year the Klan has been trying to march and recruit in small towns around West Virginia. But everywhere they have gone they have been met by spontaneous anti-racist protests like the one in Fayetteville. <>

**NEW YORK CITY MAYOR CONDEMNED FOR
COVER UP IN POLICE MURDER OF DOMINICAN**

Around 250 people demonstrated in New York's City Hall Park on April 21. They decried the murder of Juan Rodriguez, a 40-year-old Dominican. Rodriguez was beaten to death in his home by

policemen on January 30.

The protesters were particularly angry at the city's cover-up of this brutal murder. The city has ruled that Rodriguez died of "cardiac arrest". And the police murderers have been left uncharged. The protesters edged their way up to City Hall to denounce Mayor Koch, despite police orders to stay away. Nine days earlier about 2,000 people marched through Brooklyn to protest the Koch administration's cover-up of this racist murder. <>

STUDENTS SIT-IN AGAINST RACISM AT HARVARD

On May 10 fifty students staged a 24-hour sit-in at the office of the dean of the Harvard law school. The students demanded the hiring of additional minority faculty.

After an all-night occupation 200 students marched from the dean's office to a rally on the Commons. It was announced at the rally that the administration had agreed to seven of the students' twelve demands. However, the main demands--the hiring of a black woman before next school year and the hiring of twenty minority professors in the next four years--were referred to a committee. Students say the struggle is not yet over. <>

STRIKES AND WORKPLACE NEWS

Below are news briefs from the workers' movement that didn't make it into the June 1 **Workers' Advocate** due to lack of space.

**NEW YORK GOVERNMENT HELPS SADDLE
DUNLOP WORKERS WITH CONCESSIONS**

On May 2, rubber workers at the Dunlop Tire plant in Tonawanda, New York, rejected a proposed contract. The deal included line speedup, job combination, and transferring work to nonunion plants. Among the outrageous demands was a provision whereby Dunlop would reward workers for producing 200% of production quotas while disciplining and laying off those who produce at only 130% of the quota.

The Dunlop workers firmly defeated this posterous contract. Then the company started its dirty work. Company officials claimed that the workers' vote against concessions forced Dunlop to expand operations in Georgia instead of in the Buffalo area. They implied the plant in Tonawanda would be phased out. The local newspapers corroborated the company's claim. And the union bureaucrats jumped in line to blackmail the workers to revote on the contract. Under such pressure the concessions deal was ratified.

After the contract was approved, the real story came to light. Dunlop never intended to expand in Georgia. It had already decided to expand in the Buffalo area. New York state had offered incentives for expansion which the company could not afford to turn down. State officials had planned a grandiose press conference to announce the planned expansion, but they postponed the announcement until the workers had been duped into accepting the concessions contract. <>

**JAMES RIVER PAPERWORKERS STRIKE
IN OREGON**

On April 15, more than 500 paper workers walked off the job at the James River Corp. mill in Halsey, Oregon. They are striking against the management's demand for job combination. On April 18 a picket line of over 400 workers demonstrated at the plant.

The company wants to install what it calls the "High Performance Work System". High performance means that workers in a department would be trained to do all the jobs in that department--

maintenance, mechanical or production jobs. The aim of the system is to increase productivity along with profits. As many as 150 production jobs could be eliminated through this system. <>

HEAD START STRIKE IN NEW YORK

As of mid-May, workers at Head Start centers in Suffolk, New York have been on strike for six weeks. They are fighting Head Start's blatant breaking of their contract.

The primarily female work force is paid \$5-\$7 per hour for caring for small children. Over a year ago, the workers voted in union representation.

The contract that was negotiated then dealt with understaffing, wages and benefits, asbestos hazards, and educational issues. The contract also stipulated a minimal wage raise in six months.

However, Head Start has ignored the contract and has taken back the meager wage raise it had originally agreed to. <>

MASSACHUSETTS BAKERY WORKERS ON STRIKE

On May 2, 750 bakery truck drivers for Continental Bakery Co. walked out at 25 distribution centers throughout New England. The next day, 1,400 workers at the company's bakery in Natick, Massachusetts joined the strike.

Continental is the largest baking company in the U.S. They make Wonder Bread and Hostess products. It is a subsidiary of the billion-dollar Ralston Purina company.

The strike erupted after contract talks broke down over the issue of management establishing schedules without regard to seniority. <>

SAN FRANCISCO JANITORS STRIKE

A week-long strike by 1,800 janitors in San Francisco has the city piling up with trash. The workers, who service more than 200 buildings downtown, went on strike a week ago after months of fruitless negotiations with the San Francisco Maintenance Contractors Association.

Many incidents have occurred on the militant picket lines set up at the buildings. On May 28, police claimed the strikers chased a security guard and clubbed him with their picket sticks. In all

there have been three injuries and 10 strikers have been arrested.

The Teamsters union is honoring the janitors' picket line. Therefore, garbage service, freight deliveries and pickups have been disrupted.

Management is seeking to freeze the workers'

wages for all three years of the contract and install a two-tier pay system in which new employees would receive less than current workers. The workers are fighting to defeat the two-tier plot and are also demanding a 50 cent per hour wage increase for each year of the contract. <>

NO TO TODD SHIPYARD'S EXPANSION OF SUBCONTRACTING!

Excerpted from the June 6 leaflet of the MLP-Seattle:

On Friday, May 20, a dozen or so shipscalers were laid off from Todd shipyard. They were replaced the following Monday with workers from a Todd subcontractor, Northwest Enviroservice. Through the medium of rumors from management, Todd has threatened to lay off the remaining 32 scalers and replace them with subcontractors. Similarly, there are two painting subcontractors working in the yard--Coastal coatings and HER. There is talk of further layoffs of Todd painters. Various supervisors have also said that Todd will try to get the painters who work for different companies to compete against each other for "cost savings". In other words, compete for the most speedup, worst conditions, least safety, etc.

In its typical arrogant fashion, Todd has given the workers no explanation whatsoever of what it is doing and what it plans for the future. It is just passing out pink slips like candy and spreading layoff rumors to the max. The callous behavior of the company fits in with the central purpose of the new subcontracting scheme. Todd is trying to strip away the last remaining shreds of seniority fights and jobs security from the shipyard workers.

What does Todd gain through subcontracting?

To the extent that its own employees are replaced with subcontractors, Todd gets three advantages: 1) all seniority guarantees are effectively eliminated, 2) wages are cut by \$1 or \$2/hour, 3) Todd can legally bust the union organ-

ization if it wants to.

Metal trades union officials are tying their own hands

If one can find a union hack these days, he will say that his "hands are tied", that Todd is abiding by the contract with its expansion of subcontracting. This is a bald-faced lie. Todd is blatantly violating article 31.3, which states that all past practice "mutually recognized at Todd's Seattle Division by the Employer and the Union, whether expressly covered by this collective bargaining agreement or otherwise, will continue in effect unchanged until the expiration of this agreement, except as specifically modified as provided herein or by mutual agreement between the Party. In August 1985, Todd Seattle reached a pre-arbitration agreement with the Shipsealers' Local 541 which required that Todd would maintain 80% of the work in the yard with Todd employees, and no more than 20% with subcontractors. This is a "mutually recognized past practice", and Todd has well over 20% of the scaler work today being done by the subcontractors.

Grievances alone may not stop Todd's attacks, since the Reaganite labor boards often rule arbitrarily for the companies. But the fact that the union hacks won't even lift a pen to fill out a grievance shows just how deep their collaboration with Todd goes.

The labor fakers are also trying to divide the workers. Out of one side of their mouths they say "it's only happening to the other crafts, don't worry". Out of the other side they say, "we would organize some protest action, but the other crafts wouldn't support us."

Divide and conquer

The grand prize for divide and conquer has to go to the circulators of a sticker that shows a rat with a slash through it. This is directed at the employees of non-union subcontractors who are allegedly rats or scabs. What rot! The definition of a scab is someone who crosses a picket line or assists work that is being struck. The employees of the subcontractors are doing neither. **In fact, many of them are the same workers who have been at Todd or other yards for years--only their seniority and wages have been stolen.** Obviously the issue is for all the workers in the yard, whether working for Todd or subcontractors, to unite and fight for full seniority and wages, and realistic limits on subcontracting.

The top union officials don't believe that strikebreakers are scabs. Instead, the bottom line for them is whether or not a worker is paying dues. That's why the Boilermakers' and Electricians' locals signed up scabs who worked during the Lockheed lockout and the boatyard strikes in 1986. That's why the Boilermakers' local forced the union boatyard workers to repair struck tugs and barges during the Crowley strikes last year. The union hacks could care less about the seniority, wages and conditions of the shipyard workers--as long as they get their dues. This is

the reasoning behind the "rat sticker".

The labor fakers are cowardly wimps when it comes to facing Todd, but they'll turn on the rank and file workers in a second and call them "rats". Shame on the bureaucrat-lovers who brought the divisive rat sticker into town. It should be defaced or torn down wherever it appears.

To hell with Todd's profitability! Defend Seniority and Wages

...The expansion of subcontracting, with its effective elimination of seniority, could bring the conditions at Todd very near to what Lockheed tried to impose. The Lockheed workers stood as one. They preferred to see the yard close than to agree to the elimination of seniority and other concessions that would have undercut the conditions of every union shipyard in the country. The closure of Lockheed has not eliminated a single job. It just means that the work is being done at Todd instead. The danger now is that Todd will implement the massive concessions that Lockheed failed to. It is starting to do just that with its new subcontractor scheme.

...Rank and file action is the most powerful method for building the workers' unity and forcing Todd to back down. <>

**Behind the rhetoric of the reformists:
WHAT KIND OF MOVEMENT IS JESSE JACKSON BUILDING?**

Continued from the front page

Reformists Plunge Into Jackson Campaign

But that won't stop the reformist left. Their mission in life is to put reformist blinders on the people--to tie them to the skirts of the Democratic Party.

A number of the reformist groups that call themselves "Marxists" have plunged into the Jackson campaign. Some of these forces say they have criticism of Jackson on issues like his support for zionist Israel or for U.S. bullying against Panama. But, with or without criticism, they laud the Jackson campaign in the most exalted way.

A section of the reformist groups support Jackson in a more frank or honest fashion in the sense that these reformists make no bones about their support for the Democratic Party. They more or less recognize the significance of the Jackson campaign for what it is: a push from the more social-democratic wing of the Democratic Party for a more liberal policy in the Party. For example, the pro-Soviet revisionist group Line of March (Frontline newspaper) is pretty candid about this. So is the official pro-Soviet CPUSA, although it must be added that the CPUSA's enthusiasm for Jackson is balanced by its enthusiasm for Dukakis and the other Democrats.

Then there is another stream of Jackson boosters, who are less frank about the character of his campaign. They are claiming that the campaign is a movement for the political independence of the masses apart from the capitalist parties. They also try to paint the campaign in working class and even revolutionary or nearly communist colors. It doesn't matter that neither Jackson himself, nor any of the main powers in his campaign would agree to such claims. That's of little import to groups like the reformist Workers World Party or the Maoist group League of Revolutionary Struggle (Unity newspaper). Their preoccupation isn't dealing with political realities. It's with spinning webs of fantastic and exaggerated claims about the Jackson campaign to ensnare workers and activists who would otherwise have reservations about a Democratic Party politician running on a typically liberal platform.

A "New Movement"?

Take for example the Workers World group.

WWP put out a statement by its own candidates explaining its "enthusias[ti]c call for active support for the Jackson campaign."

From their statement one would hardly know that Jackson is a Democratic Party candidate. One would think he is running against the Democrats, not as the man who promises to bring in the votes for whoever is the Democratic candidate in November. Similarly, they slur over all the other points of Jackson's program. They just dismiss what Jackson actually stands for as unimportant. The WWP argues:

"The Jesse Jackson campaign has become a vehicle for that **expression of working class discontent**. ... Jackson has walked labor picket lines from Maine to Wisconsin."

From which they conclude,

"It is not Jackson's program, however, which is the basis of WWP's support, but that his candidacy has given expression to a new movement." (Workers' World, April 21, emphasis added.)

Unfortunately, these WWPers have put everything upside down. True enough, Jackson walks picket lines. True enough, he appeals to the workers' discontent. But what does he tell the picketers? That's the crux of the matter: Because he preaches to them against strikes and the class struggle.

Likewise in the anti-racist struggle. Jackson poured cold water on the protests against the Howard Beach lynchings, for example, with his sermons about seeking "common ground" with the racists.

Jackson's underlying message is always the same: register to vote and put Democrats in office. Is this not an expression of bourgeois reformism? Is this not giving expression to liberal capitalist interests that want to channel working class discontent into the safe harbors of the Democratic Party?

This is not a "new movement" at all. A reformist wing of the Democratic Party has launched repeated campaigns over the past half-century with the aim of derailing the class struggle and the mass movements.

An "Independent Movement of the Working Class"

Look closely and what WWP is basing its claim of a "new movement" on boils down to the racial

composition of the Jackson campaign and its support; Jackson is a black man getting votes from the masses of all nationalities. Sam Marcy, WWP leader and house theoretician, correctly points out that Jackson's '88 campaign has gained support from blacks and other oppressed nationalities as well as a large number of white workers. But from there he flies into outer space to draw the conclusion:

"This [the extent of white support for the Jackson campaign] is not only a tremendous contribution to working class solidarity, but it paves the way for an **ultimately independent movement of the working class.**" ("The basis of our support for Jackson," Workers World, April 21.)

Who does Marcy think he is fooling? After all, black Democratic mayors have been elected in Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Atlanta and other cities with a large number of white workers' votes. In some of these elections it could be said that this was a sign that workers have anti-racist sentiment. But that's a far, far cry from Marcy's exaggerated claim. The election of black Democrats to city halls and many other posts has been one of the means for propping up the positions of the Democratic Party among the masses. It could hardly be said that this leads towards working class independence.

What's more, the class and racial make up of the electoral support of a given political campaign can not define its political character nor its degree of independence from the capitalist parties. Electoral contests between capitalist candidates often reflect class polarization. For instance, the '84 presidential elections showed the deep resentment against Reaganism among the poorest voters and the black and other oppressed masses, who voted overwhelmingly for Mondale as opposed to Reagan. But contrary to the logic of Sam Marcy's arithmetic, this obviously did not herald political independence. Nor does Jackson's Democratic Party campaign today.

Democratic Party Politicking

The exalted claims being made about the Jackson campaign slur over the actual nuts and bolts of the campaign. The campaign runs on Democratic Party machinery, with support from a sizable section of the Democratic Party officialdom. The same machinery behind many Democratic Party officials (mayors, city council members, state legislators, congressmen) has been cranking for the Jackson campaign. The crew of advisers behind the campaign is studded with veterans of past Democratic campaigns; for example, Bert Lance,

who was Carter's campaign director and also a Cabinet member in his administration, plays a big role.

A major focus of the campaign has been voter registration for the Democratic Party. Now much of the attention is on political jockeying for the convention. There's much talk about brokering the Jackson vote into so many positions in the Party leadership and so many posts in a possible Democratic administration.

What is this if not old-fashioned Democratic Party politicking? It takes a creative imagination to find some kind of "new" or "independent" movement here. But fantasy is just what these reformists are selling.

Baraka's "Objective Rainbow"

Perhaps the man who best captures this fantastic spirit is Amiri Baraka, a leading member of the Maoist group LRS. In a commentary entitled "Super Tuesday and the African American National Question", Baraka paints up the Jackson campaign in flaming revolutionary phrases about "Black Self Determination" and the "Black Liberation Movement". Baraka's enthusiasm knows no bounds:

"The **objective Rainbow**," Baraka proclaims, "is an **exact physical parallel to The United Front and mass organizations and indeed even the communist party we seek**, with the latter its working class leadership that must develop, for it is authentically brought into existence."

The operative word here is the "objective" before the "Rainbow". Baraka repeats this word "objective" several times because the original "rainbow coalition" was as ephemeral and short-lived as rainbows tend to be. The 1984 promise of a rainbow coalition was a promise of an autonomous place within Jackson's campaign for various social-democratic, left-liberal and bourgeois nationalist elements among the oppressed nationalities. Now there's not even a pretense of autonomy or a rainbow. Instead of conceding the rainbow's disappearance, Baraka resorts to the euphemism "objective Rainbow" for what is clearly a straight Democratic Party campaign.

Baraka's statement is so absurd that it's nonsensical. Here is a Democratic Party electoral campaign that all at once is the "exact physical parallel" three different things which are not even parallel to each other: the "united front", the "mass organizations", and "even the communist party we seek".

This nonsense shows how far the revisionist groups have descended into liquidationism. They have turned the concept of "United Front" into a

code word for cuddling happily with the capitalist liberals. They have gutted the whole point of building mass organization as they have abandoned the idea of organizing the masses independent of the bourgeoisie. They have liquidated the tasks of constructing the communist party of the workers because their party is the liberal-reformist marsh within the Democratic Party.

**Encourage Every Step Towards
Working Class Independence**

But the Marxist-Leninists, the communists, the revolutionary workers have a different stand. This is the stand of the class struggle, of building the revolutionary working class movement against the capitalists and their political parties. And this stand is what guides them in relation to the Jackson campaign as well.

In the workplaces and neighborhoods, on the picket lines and in the demonstrations, workers and activists can be found who have hopes in Jackson. They hope that his campaign might at least give voice to some of their needs and their desire to see the little fish band together against the big barracudas. The work and agitation of the communists must aim at linking up with these aspirations of the workers and encourage them in

the direction of political independence.

This means encouraging the workers' growing discontent with the capitalist parties. The workers need to be armed with the truth that the Jackson campaign is on the same dead-end course of repeated reform campaigns within the Democratic Party. They don't need fairy tales about "new movements" and "objective Rainbows".

This means encouraging the strikes, protests and mass actions of the working people. The workers need concrete criticism of Jackson's sermons to reconcile striking worker and strikebreaking capitalist, victims of racism and lynch mobs. They don't need more hosannas for Jackson as a model fighter for the workers and oppressed.

This means encouraging the workers on the path of revolutionary mass struggle. The sooner that the workers recognize that Jackson's fine promises are so much pie in the sky, the sooner they will recognize that their pressing needs won't be satisfied without the workers taking matter into their own hands and unleashing class battles against the capitalist rulers. The workers don't need inflated hopes in some phrases in the Democratic Party program, a program that will be forgotten before the trash is swept from the floor of the Atlanta convention. <>

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

--Part Three--

Building a Revolutionary Trend or Worshipping Aristotle and Kant?

By a member of the Central Committee

Instead of continuing on further theoretical points, let's pause to consider the new letter from "Discontented", the main author of the Draft Letter. [It is printed in this issue of the **Supplement** beginning on page 40, and all page references to the letter are to the copy in the **Supplement**.]

It is sad to see what has become of a comrade who once fought against the bourgeoisie. His letter does not deal with the issues of revolutionary literature, other than to disparage Marxism-Leninism. Instead the issue is to punish anyone who dares disagree with him. It is a remarkable display of mud-slinging, word-chopping, evasion, selective memory, and name-dropping.

He need not deal seriously with the views of myself or other comrades, but only shout about Party hacks and persecution and call me a "conscious" user of the "'big lie' technique". (p. 46, col. 1-2) He need not deal with the actual situation among the discontented comrades, because he alone is the issue. He need not deal with the fact that activists outside our Party, from Texas prisons to the mountains of Kurdistan, have been interested in **Struggle**, and the **Supplement's** articles on the literary debate, because that goes against his preconceived idea that the whole issue is a concoction of Party ignoramuses.

And with respect to his own views, one isn't supposed to look too deeply at his real statements and actions. It is supposed to suffice that he tells us that his motives are of the highest and purest sort. He can admit he took part in hiding the Draft Letter criticizing **Struggle** for two years, and he can complain bitterly for half a year about the articles in the **Supplement**, and then tell us how he welcomes "open discussion and debate" (p. 41, col. 2). He can stop all revolutionary work, and then pretend that it is someone else who wants to "drum [him] out of the revolutionary movement". (p. 45, col. 2) He can write the most venomous slurs against the Party and Party activists, and then self-righteously say that it is others who "did not hold their hands back from this shameless and disgusting slander of people who have spent their adult lives in the ranks of the revolutionary movement." (page 46, col. 2)

And then there is the charlatanism or quackery. He can call upon the memory of Aristotle, Kant,

Hegel, and Diderot without saying what these philosophers are supposed to teach us or what his conclusions are. And then he pats himself on the back for being the one who is "arriv[ing] at new conclusions" (p. 46, col. 2). He can drown any issue in generalities and high-flown mumbo-jumbo and name-dropping, and make ludicrous blunders about the issues at stake, and then pose as the master of "factual" analysis and "concrete work". But don't worry. He assures one and all that his views are based on years of the most careful and protracted study, and that his opponents are moralistic tyrants who display "an appalling ignorance of the history of literature" and "of contemporary literary theory" and "an incredible insensitivity to the concrete features of literature"

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(p. 47, col. 1-2). But one little question. In whose eyes?

What Happened to Revolutionary Literature?

In his letter, there is a lot of sound and fury, huffing and puffing. But he stays real far away from certain issues.

The literary debate was supposed to be about how to develop a revolutionary literary trend. The **Draft Letter** began by saying that it welcomed

"the publication of the work of revolutionary activists who are attempting to develop a revolutionary literature."

(**Supplement**, 10 Nov. 1987, p. 19, col. 1)

But in "Discontented's" new letter, the concept of revolutionary literature drops out.

This is interesting because, at first sight, "Discontented" complains about every statement I or others have ever made in the literary debate, even about the subheads that were added to make it easier to read the **Draft Letter**. Everything is a lie, lie, lie. But when one looks more closely, one discovers that there are a number of assertions that he does not either challenge or discuss. And furthermore, these assertions are at the very heart of the **Reply to the Draft Letter-Part One**.

The **Reply** pointed out that the **Draft 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 doctrinairism. 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 ...

"**After all that, what is left to the concept of a revolutionary literature?**" (**Supplement**, Nov. 1987, p. 12, col. 1-2, emphasis added)

I suggested that

"...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."

(**Ibid.**, p. 13, col. 2, emphasis added)

"Discontented" does not reply to this. He doesn't deny it. For all his Latin phrases and his years of study and years around the Party, he doesn't have anything to say about what his concept of revolutionary literature is. Perhaps, for the discontented in general, the idea of "revolutionary literature" itself is one of the many questions which they claim has yet to be answered and documented, one of those questions with no "easy answers".

"Discontented" also is silent about the question of whether there are bourgeois trends in literature. The **Reply-Part One** pointed out that the **Draft Letter** goes to the point of casting doubt on whether one should speak of such things; it ended up by refusing to speak of bourgeois trends unless there were quotation marks around the word bourgeois to indicate that such trends are only so-called bourgeois trends, not real bourgeois trends.

But this is an important issue. If it is wrong to speak of the bourgeois trends in literature, it might stand to reason that there is no need for or sense in building up a revolutionary trend either. All that would be left is "literature as a whole", which "Discontented" promises to tell us about in a later letter. Progressive writers should then simply merge with the bourgeois cultural circles. Their only special task would be, perhaps, to give a coat of "Marxist" phraseology to the war of the cultural establishment against the "doctrinaire" activists who want to create a contemporary revolutionary literature.

"Discontented" also is silent about the question of communist independence with respect to the political trends in the movement. The **Draft Letter** had actually raised not just literary questions, but also the issue of attitude to the mass movement. Using the example of the 60's and of the struggle against the war in Vietnam, it identified criticism of unclear ideas with sectarian opposition to the movement. And there really is a relation between such a political view and literature. If there is no need for communist independence in the mass movement and in everyday life, what need would there be for communist independence in the reflection of real life, in literature? The **Draft Letter** was correct to connect political issues to literature, but utterly wrong in how it dealt with both literature and politics.

"Discontented" does take up the question of the

bourgeois views propagated by the university circles and official literary establishment. But how does he do it? He pretends that the issue is whether all students and professors are inherently bad. He ignores the tasks of ideological struggle that face progressive people in the bourgeois schools. He simply asserts, in essence, that he is a graduate student and proud of it. He ends up by ridiculing the criticism of the bourgeois academic authorities as the product of ignoramuses who think it suffices to be "pure and red" (p. 47, col. 1) And that's it.

The **Draft Letter** had also, right from the start, begun by objecting to the assertion 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." (**Supplement**, Nov. 1987, pp. 19-20 for where it is discussed in the **Draft Letter**, p. 13 for where it is discussed in the **Reply-Part One**)

However, in its typical hide-and-seek method, the **Draft Letter** had tried to leave things vague. It opposed the editor of **Struggle** for writing this formulation, but explicitly refused to say whether it was right or wrong. And "Discontented" still leaves this open.

This time, in his current letter, "Discontented" has forgotten all about revolutionary literature. He talks about "aesthetics", about literature in general, about creativity and artistic enjoyment, about the "general categories of thought, cognition and ideology" (p. 43, col. 1), and on and on. Anything except revolutionary practice. Anything except the particular tasks of revolutionary literature, about the struggle against the bourgeois literary trends, etc. We are advised, as the result of years of study, that the aesthetical works of Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, and Diderot "must be studied and highly valued" (p. 42, col. 2). But, among other things, these philosophers certainly didn't deal with the issues of revolutionary literature.

Of course, "Discontented" promises us further installments of his letter. But apparently these aren't going to take up revolutionary literature either. The next thing he promises to write about is "the attitude to historical culture". And then we are to be treated to "the distinction between imaginative literature and publicism" and afterwards to "the distinction between partisan political literature and literature as a whole". If all this is in the spirit of the **Draft Letter**, it means more denigration of the concept of revolutionary literature as mere publicism, as mere partisan political literature, as mere "mouthing off".

And finally, he is to reach the heights of "consciousness and ideology".

The **Draft Letter** said it was worried about a "problem" with "fundamental bearing on the orientation" of **Struggle**. It looks more and more as if this fundamental issue is whether a revolutionary literary trend should be built at all.

An Overview of the New Letter

"Discontented" goes against the revolutionary struggle from a number of different angles. In essence, what he writes is simply a long-winded and intellectualist rendition of the points made by "Loyal Reader" in the anonymous letter published in the last **Supplement**.

To begin with, he doesn't see any role of revolutionary practice worth mentioning. He doesn't see fit to mention the role of any contemporary revolutionary literature. If he sees any significance to the work in **Struggle**, a magazine he claims to support, he doesn't see fit to mention it.

Revolutionary theory doesn't fare any better with him. In the **Draft Letter** he denied the existence of a correct Marxist-Leninist line on literature. Here he continues his ridicule of the materialist stand on literature. He comes up with the undialectical demand for a "full" literary theory. The important point is not whether a theory is correct, but is it a "full" theory? And strangely enough for a man who boasts of his past revolutionary activity, the tasks of the revolution are one thing such a "full" theory is allowed to leave out. He finds "classical" models of such fullness in the works of Aristotle, Kant, Hegel and Diderot.

This means opposing historical materialism, that is, materialism applied to the study of human history, to how societies change, how one social system is supplanted by another, etc. Some of the philosophers he calls upon were straight-out idealists, and none of them were historical materialists.

These philosophers also had differing systems. By regarding all of them as "classical models", he is declaring his "freedom from all integral and considered theory" (**What Is To Be Done?**, Ch. I, Sec. D.).

All this is done without considering any concrete issue about literature or any problem facing **Struggle**. He then passes on to his one thesis about literature--that it transcends ideology and politics. He doesn't bother making a serious presentation of what the materialists actually think about the relationship of ideology and literature. He doesn't try to deal with the materialist standpoint that literature becomes truly ideological because it reflects life. Instead he pretends that I

believe that

"all literature merely consists in authors mouthing off their political and ideological opinions" (p. 45, col. 2).

Really? Is this what he thinks of **Struggle** and of current revolutionary work? Or is he going to pretend that he is the one who really supports **Struggle** and I don't?

He instead declares that literature is not "primarily" ideological. This is like declaring that physics is a science, but it is not "primarily" a science. It means tearing the very heart of the concept of ideology, as literature is one of the main and fundamental ways ideology is expressed.

To back up his views, he continues to put forward the absurd view that Balzac kept his views and opinions out of his works. In fact, it is quite amusing that the authors of the **Draft Letter** take the examples of Balzac, Tolstoy, and Brecht, and then try to advocate squeezing ideology out of literature, as one of them once put it. If having views and putting them into one's works, or designing one's works around these views, is a crime, then these three authors, of all authors, are guilty, guilty, guilty. If the authors of the **Draft Letter** really think there is something of value to these authors, then they must abandon their theories about literature transcending ideology. Otherwise they are slapping themselves in the face and abandoning all consistency. Otherwise they are praising these authors not for the content of their works, but simply because it is fashionable to praise them. It is fashionable to praise Brecht and Tolstoy, and it is fashionable to declare that literature transcends ideology.

Finally, anti-partyism and anti-activism is another main theme of "Discontented's" work. He is upset with the idea that some comrades "live by" Marxist beliefs. He answers every criticism by claiming that it really just translates to his resigning from the Party. After a while, one gets the idea that he is proud of having abandoned revolutionary work and is assuring one and all that he is now safe. After all, he may quote Marx, but he takes Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, and Diderot as the "classical" models in the field he works in, literature.

Be that as it may, he thinks nothing of lying about the Party. He implies that he is being persecuted for reading Brecht and Lukacs:

"(As regards the latter two authors [Lukacs and Brecht], if our would-be student of literature frequents Marxist-Leninist Party circles, he should either hide the fact that he/she reads these proscribed authors or brace himself for the inevitable consequences.)" (p. 45, col. 1)

Why would he make such a crude and obvious lie? But any mud will do. Why say that he lost the spirit to continue fighting the bourgeoisie--when instead he can imply that he was forced out for reading Brecht? Why say straightforwardly that he lied to friends and comrades about his views on literature? Why, he was supposedly just hiding the fact that he read Brecht from tyrannical Party leaders.

This is not the first time that fashionable views from university and bourgeois cultural circles have been arrogantly propagated as socialism. It occurred repeated in the German workers' party in the time of Marx and Engels. Such influence has usually reinforced rightist currents, but also anarchistic ideas. Referring to this phenomenon, at one point Engels wrote that:

"There has been a students' revolt in the German Party. For the past 2-3 years, a crowd of students, literary men and other young declassed bourgeois has rushed into the Party, arriving just in time to occupy most of the editorial positions on the new journals which are sprouting and, as usual, they regard the bourgeois universities as a Socialist Staff College which gives them the right to enter the ranks of the party with an officer's if not a general's brevet. All these gentlemen go in for Marxism, but of the kind you were familiar with in France ten years ago and of which Marx said: 'All I know is that I'm no Marxist!' And of these gentlemen he would probably have said what Heine said of his imitators: I sowed dragons and reaped fleas.

"These worthy fellows, whose impotence is only matched by their arrogance, have found some support in the new recruits to the Party in Berlin--typical Berlinism, which is to be interpreted as presumption, cowardice, empty bluster and gift of the gab all rolled into one, seems to have come to the surface again for a moment; it provided the chorus for the student gentry." (From a letter by Engels to Paul Lafargue, August 27, 1890, as cited in **Marx and Engels on Literature**, edited by Lee Baxandall and Stefan Morawski, Telos Press.)

Now let us examine some of these points in more detail.

Is There a Marxist-Leninist Line on Literature?

One of the main themes of "Discontented's" new

letter is denial of the existence of the materialist standpoint towards literature championed by Marxism-Leninism.

It is typical of "Discontented's" method that he begins on this front by indignantly saying that it is a lie that he has denied the existence of a Marxist-Leninist line on literature, and then proceeds to argue for page after page that there isn't such a Marxist-Leninist line. He uses this method again and again and again.

First, here is his indignant protest that he has been slandered.

"...I can and do deny that I have ever tried to overthrow Marxist-Leninist theory and that I ever said that this theory does not exist (!!!!)" (p. 41, col.2).

This was supposed to be the proof that the Supplement had engaged in

"...the filthy practice of putting obviously anti-Marxist ideas and words into the mouths of those you disagree with in order to discredit them..." (p. 41, col. 2).

First of all, what did the Reply actually say about the Draft Letter?

It said that the Draft Letter denied the existence of a Marxist-Leninist line "on literature": "... it [the Draft Letter] states that revolutionary theory says nothing consistent about literature. **There is supposedly no Marxist-Leninist line on literature.**" (Supplement, Nov. 1987, p. 17, col. 1, emphasis added)

The Reply-Part One then continued to discuss this point. It is right at the end of this passage that the paragraph cited by "Discontented" appears that states that the authors of the Draft Letter "used to accept the Party program and regard Marxism-Leninism as the theoretical basis of the proletarian movement. But they are now throwing it aside as irrelevant." It is again referring to the issue of whether Marxis-Leninism applies to literature. This is why this paragraph then ends by comparing the Draft Letter's view on literature with that of bourgeois professors on the political and other fronts: "This is the same way that bourgeois professors mock at Marxism in the economic, political, or other fronts."

Now, did the Draft Letter deny the existence of a Marxist-Leninist line on literature or not?

Was this what it said?

Here are the words of the Draft Letter itself:

"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 hundreds years of 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." (Supplement, Nov. 1987, pp. 21-2)

This clearly denies the existence of "a well-worked out and correct line on literature". I suppose that this passage doesn't deny the existence of a "Marxist-Leninist" stand if that stand is regarded as wrong, unclear, self-contradictory, and superficial. But it does deny the existence of a correct Marxist-Leninist stand.

A New Twist on the Question

"Discontented" still upholds the Draft Letter. Now however he wants everyone to forget the Draft Letter's clear statement on the non-existence of a Marxist-Leninist line. It is to be replaced by the question of whether there is a "full Marxist-Leninist theory".

He begins by finding the one place where the phrase "full Marxist-Leninist theory" occurs in the Reply to the Draft Letter. It is used simply to draw a contrast between the fundamental principles that inspire revolutionary literary work and the wider body of Marxist-Leninist elaboration on these and other literary issues. It refers simply to the fact that various comrades have read differing amounts concerning these questions, that's all. It appears in the Reply-Part One right after it quotes the Draft Letter denying the existence of a correct line on literature. It states:

"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." (**Supplement**, Nov. 1987, p. 17, col. 2)

"Discontented" returns to this passage again and again to denounce it. But does he give his stand on the issues of the ideological superstructure, of the vital role of revolutionary practice, or of what materialism teaches about literature?

Not at all. Anything but that.

Instead he displays moral indignation over the fact that revolutionary work doesn't resemble a graduate school seminar. How dare people write plays and poems and songs, criticize bourgeois culture, and build up a revolutionary literature trend -- while not having read the full theory on literature. (And especially how dare they criticize comrade "Discontented"! Horrors! Horrors! Horrors! "Discontented" actually tries to ridicule this. He states in an ironical parenthetical comment that

"...it does not matter, he tells us, that few have read the remarks of Marx, Engels, and Lenin on literature, oh no, that is irrelevant!!!..." (p. 44, col. 1-2)

This reminds me of the time when a professor, whose name I have long since forgot, became a byword among communist students at a certain university for ridiculing activists for taking up revolutionary work without first reading all three volumes of **Capital**.

"Discontented" also ridicules that I and other comrades live by basic revolutionary principles. He thinks that this must be in contradiction to "investigation and thought", to reading and study, to scientific investigation. It must mean that I want to settle issues

"in the manner of religious disputes, by a statement of the principles one lives by, the beliefs one subscribes to." (p. 44, col. 1)

No, "Discontented", the communist activists don't argue that these principles are correct because they believe in them--but when they are convinced of the truth of Marxism-Leninism, they put it into practice. They live by the principles they believe in, take Marxism-Leninism and revolutionary politics seriously, and actually fight the bourgeoisie and bourgeois culture. (But do they have a "full" theory of the morality of living according to principles? Perhaps it is better to be unprincipled and wishy-washy, better to capitulate to the powers-that-be, until one has the "full" theory?) All I did by noting that the issues under dispute were the principles that comrades live by was point out the importance of the issues under

discussion, as opposed to, say, a disagreement over literary taste.

Is There a Full Marxist-Leninist Theory of Literature?

But is there a full Marxist-Leninist theory of literature? It depends what one means by a full theory.

Does one mean a theory that answers all the questions of literary technique and criticism? Or perhaps, does one mean a theory that provides a recipe for literary works and literary criticism? (Or worse yet, does it mean a theory that can be used to grind out university papers mechanically.) In either case, then no such Marxist-Leninist theory exists, and that is Marxism-Leninism's strong point, not its weak point. Marxism-Leninism orients the revolutionary struggle. It does not replace the need for revolutionaries doing their own analysis concerning the class struggle that faces them; it provides a framework for this analysis, and is in turn developed further by the hard work of the revolutionaries. This is true both in politics and in literature.

Literature is alive and growing. And hence a correct literary theory should also be alive. A final, complete and full theory would be a mistake; According to "Discontented", complete theories do exist. But I don't think **Struggle** should adopt one.

But what about the theory of "aesthetics", the theory of the beautiful? Can one adopt a complete aesthetical theory, a theory that, by its very completeness, is independent of the growing and living body of literature?

Aesthetics in the old sense was such a thing. It was the theory of abstract concepts of the beautiful, the sublime, the good, the creative, and it was a part of the old philosophy. Playing with the concepts of the beautiful and the sublime was an important part of many "complete" philosophical systems. But most of this type of literary philosophy has been supplanted by materialist views in the same way as the actual progress of natural science supplanted metaphysics and much of the old philosophy of science.

"Discontented" on the Full Literary Theory

"Discontented" believes that there should be a full literary theory. Since the literary debate is supposed to be on the orientation for **Struggle**, I presume that he thinks that **Struggle** should be guided by such a theory. He elaborates on why he thinks Marxism-Leninism does not live up to the needed requirements.

But how does he go about explaining the inadequacy of Marxism-Leninism?

Does he raise issues of revolutionary orientation and explain how Marxism doesn't provide a framework to deal with them? No.

Does he give an exposition of what Marxism contains and what it lacks? No.

He counts pages.

That's right, he counts the number of pages and books devoted to aesthetical subjects. This is the culmination of the years of careful and patient study he boasts about, of his concrete and factual knowledge, of his study of literary theory and literary works.

He writes:

"(a) In the classics, there is clearly a full theory of, say, the state or political economy: anyone familiar with Marxism can cite half-a-dozen standard, well-known and book length works which elaborate these full theories. There are no such works, there is no such elaboration of a theory of literature." (p. 42, col.2)

So Marxism has a full theory of politics-- because there are books on it? All one has to do is count the standard, book length works? And suppose, say, we want to apply Leninist united front tactics. Are we forced to say that no such "full theory" exists, only "remarks", because just like the case of literature there are not standard, book length works on the subject?

I think that the criterion of counting pages means descending to the use of the methods of a charlatan, or faker, who wants to impress everyone with his great knowledge but actually presents nothing.

And the charlatan methods get worse as one gets deeper into his letter.

It turns out that "Discontented" himself claims that there are full Marxist-Leninist theories of literature!!! After discovering that there is no such thing as a complete Marxist-Leninist theory, he then discovers that there is such a theory, indeed many such theories. He writes that works that

"...can reasonably be said to represent a full theory of literature, particularly in the writings of Plekhanov and Lukacs. There is of course many another socialist thinker who has written more or less extensively on literature." (p. 42, col. 2)

Well, I doubt that Lukacs work will turn out to be on the same level as Plekhanov's. But that isn't the point here. "Discontented" believes that it is a defect for Marxism-Leninism not to have a "full theory" of literature, and here, lo and behold, he has apparently found his full theory. Maybe more than one, with each writer having his own

theory, and Lukacs perhaps having more than one (he was well-known for having changed his views at different periods).

But no. These are not "classic" works of Marxism-Leninism. And so, "Discontented" concludes, they don't count. This is like saying that physics or chemistry has not solved a problem unless it is solved in the classic works of Isaac Newton or Lavoisier.

"Discontented" explains that the works of these authors contain

"various, and sometimes very serious political failings..." (p. 42, col. 2)

So he looks elsewhere to find models of complete literary theories. And he finds many of them, "most notably" in

"...Aristotle's Poetics, Hegel's Aesthetics, the aesthetical works of Kant and Diderot. These works form an essential part of the classical heritage which the historical culture of mankind has bequeathed to the proletariat and scientific socialism. They must be studied and highly valued, but they must be critically assimilated to the dialectical and historical material outlook." (p. 42, col. 2, emphasis added)

Now this is hard to understand. Plekhanov and Lukacs have too many political errors, so "Discontented" runs to Aristotle, Hegel, Kant, and Diderot. That makes a lot of sense, doesn't it?

I wouldn't think so. But "Discontented" now switches to another use of the word "classical". He tells us that

"...in another sense, the aesthetics, or theories of literature, found in historical culture do establish classical standards." (p. 42, col. 2)

So it all fits together. Plekhanov doesn't count, because he is not a classic writer. But Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, and Diderot count, because "in another sense" they are classical writers. And fortunately, "Discontented" didn't think of this new standard of "classical" until he left the realm of Marxist-Leninist writers and got back to Aristotle and Kant.

And he managed to come to all these conclusions without telling the poor reader a single view held by these authors. This, in my opinion, is simple name-dropping. It is a charlatan method and has nothing to do with a serious discussion of the problems of revolutionary literature.

Back to Aristotle, Kant, Hegel and Diderot

Funnier still, is that these philosophers don't satisfy the criteria for a full theory set by "Discontented". If you recall, Discontented counted

the number of pages the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin wrote on literature in order to convince us that there wasn't a full Marxist-Leninist theory. Why, where were the six full-length books?

So let's look at these philosophers. Do they have such writings?

Here, let me stress, I am not evaluating the profundity of their ideas or their role in history. I am simply pointing out what happens when you evaluate them according to the charlatan standard of page-counting set by "Discontented" himself.

Let's start with Aristotle.

His only work on literary theory is the Poetics.

One typical edition of the Complete Works of Aristotle in English has 2,384 pages. 46 of them are devoted to the Poetics. Aristotle spends far more time on biology and other subjects than on Poetics, which is a rather short work, and certainly smaller than the amount of space in the Marxist-Leninist classics on literature. Aristotle himself spends over twice as much space on his Rhetoric, which in Aristotle's view is the art of persuading people as opposed to aesthetics.

Then we move on to Kant. There we find a strange thing for a man who is supposed to have provided a classical model of a full theory of literature. As a philosopher, Kant wasn't even that interested in literature. That, presumably, is why "Discontented" refers discreetly to his "aesthetical works" rather than his writings on literature. Kant's basic aesthetical work is his Critique of Aesthetic Judgement, which is the first of the two parts of his book the Critique of Judgement. In the Critique of Aesthetic Judgement the theory of literature is only a small part. Kant himself, in his introduction, refers to his interest in the "transcendental aspects" of the theory of aesthetics and distinguishes it from direct aesthetical work, which, he points out, "will pursue its course in the future, as in the past, independently of such inquiries [as Kant's own]."

So it seems that the number of pages and books only counts where it comes to Marxists. Why, you don't even have to be that worried about the practical problems of literature to provide a classical model of literary theory--provided you're not a Marxist, of course.

Well, what about Hegel? Although he wrote books on some subjects, he did not write a book on literary theory. Instead, his lecture on aesthetics were later put together and published as the book Aesthetics.

Furthermore, it may be noted that the Hegelian system was the weakest part of Hegel's work, the part of Hegel's work that should not be imitated in the slightest. It is precisely the Hegelian claim to completeness which was its major flaw. It consisted in deducing the world from the evolution of

the Absolute Idea. Hegel's work had value despite his system, despite his "full" theories, not because of them.

I do not know how extensive Diderot's work on literature was, so I will have to leave him aside.

The Theory of Literature "As It Is Understood Today"

But "Discontented" does have some other criteria besides pages. He gives

"a series of questions and issues which have become essential and fundamental to the theory of literature as it is understood today." (p. 42, col.2)

Mind you, he doesn't do anything but list issues, often in the most abstract and hard to understand way. But he does give this list.

This list contains nothing about the specific problems of building up revolutionary literature. It doesn't deal with the relationship between revolutionary practice and the development of literature and theory. Apparently it does include the big questions of the old philosophy, with its discussions about the relationships between the abstract ideas of creativity, enjoyment, beauty, etc. And he does use some Latin phrases, so what he says must be profound.

So the question arises, when "Discontented" says that this is the theory of literature "as it is understood today", who exactly is he referring to? Is he referring to how it is understood by present-day Marxist revolutionaries? Or how it is understood by the majority of contributors to Struggle and other authors seeking to build up revolutionary literature? If so, why aren't any of the problems that face revolutionary work in his list?

Or is he referring to it as it is understood in the mainstream cultural circles of today and in the universities?

Whatever he is referring to, it would have been forthright to put it forward openly rather than pretending that his list is the only way things are done "today".

And instead of saying which literary views are correct, or at least are materialist, he concentrates attention on "full theories of literature".

"Back to Kant"

He ended up recommending everyone study Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, and Diderot.

Back at the turn of the century, Bernstein revisionism was spreading inside the German workers' movement. On the philosophical front, Bernstein and his followers put forward "Back to Kant" as the alternative to supposedly crude, mechanical Marxist materialism. Kantianism was to

be combined with Marxism.

But "Discontented" has a far more comprehensive and tolerant plan on the literary front. He has in essence changed the slogan "back to the classics" to "back to Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, and Diderot". And do you have another philosopher you prefer? Odds are that "Discontented" wouldn't mind adding him or her to the list as well.

"Discontented" is outraged by the observation that he slavishly follows the current fashion. But the eclectic mixing of contradictory philosophies, the replacement of the quest for consistency by the mixing together of an ill-sorted patchwork of "great ideas", is all the rage in liberal university culture in the U.S. This eclecticism does not, of course, rule out putting "remarks" of Marx and Engels into the patchwork..

No, "Discontented", it was not the job of revolutionaries to stop work to read any book or any philosopher whose name you happen to know. On the contrary, it was your job to tell us what wonderful conclusions you reached from your study of Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, and Diderot, and to provide research materials and documentation. And if you reached no conclusions that are worthy of being told to us, then why are you recommending that revolutionary writers, who squeeze in precious hours of writing between jobs, family, and revolutionary activism, should follow a path that has led you nowhere? In fact, your advice, if followed by all revolutionary writers, would end artistic creation until well into the 21st century.

What's Left for Marxism?

Since "Discontented" demands a complete theory of literature, and looks towards Aristotle, Kant, Hegel and Diderot for classical models of such a theory, what's left for Marxism? What role does he give it?

Well, he has a list of works from Marxism. It is rather arbitrary. But in his view, it includes the works that are

"the most important and pertinent for working out a theory of literature" (p. 44, col. 2).

Among these works, there are those, listed under the category (b), which he calls

"specific letters and comments on literature which are especially important." (p. 44, col. 2)

In this list he includes "Lenin's articles on Tolstoy."

But wait a minute. A few paragraphs later he tells us that:

"Lenin's articles are a correct assessment of the political role and stand of Tolstoy ... I have never taken Lenin's

articles as an assessment of Tolstoy's literary achievement." (p. 45, col. 1, emphasis as in the original)

But in that case, why did he include these very same articles as among "the most important and pertinent for working out a theory of literature", indeed as among those views which are "especially important"? Isn't this utter hypocrisy?

It is simply to prove his alleged loyalty to Marxism. For, him, Marxism in literature is no longer a matter of working hard to apply the revolutionary materialist standpoint, which he holds does not provide the necessary complete literary theory. Nor is it a matter of taking part in the struggle against bourgeois culture, which he implies that only "pure and red" ignoramuses would worry about. Instead it is making a conventional bow to this or that shibboleth. Someone raises the issue of "Lenin's articles on Tolstoy": Why, he'll show them. He'll include them in his list, while specifying a little bit later that they don't apply to literature, and also hinting that he has taken "exception to this [Lenin's] political assessment" as well (p. 45, col. 1)

Take another passage in his letter where he puts forward his attitude to what Marxism is. He ridicules the idea that one would worry about what is Marxist or anti-Marxist and reduces Marxism to only upholding certain conventional phrases. He writes:

"Indeed, my point is not to argue that one position is Marxist-Leninist and the other is anti-Marxist. That is the way I find my respected opponent argues at every turn, and hence, almost at every turn, distorts the genuine nature of other differences. ... The issue, then, is one of correctness or incorrectness, truth or falsity, right or wrong--it is not an issue of loyalty or apostasy as, say, the issue of upholding the historical necessity for the dictatorship of the proletariat is. The question, therefore, can only be settled in the manner of all scientific questions..." (p. 44, col. 1, underlining added)

According to this, you are loyal to Marxism if you uphold certain phrases, such as the "historical necessity for the dictatorship of the proletariat" which are apparently supposed to be beyond the issue of truth or falsity, right or wrong, and the methods of scientific investigation. But once one gets to concrete questions, and issues of right or wrong, one has allegedly gone beyond the realm of Marxism.

In fact, the view of ideology and politics he puts forward throughout the letter and the literary debate has been one where politics and ideology is

an issue of

"mouthing off ... political and ideological opinions" (p. 45, col. 2).

Or it is a question of "leaflets and propaganda", crude things which he has, thank god, separated himself from writing, producing or distributing. The idea that one has to use the most scientific methods to engage in Marxist revolutionary politics, the idea that the issue of truth and falseness is central to Marxist ideology, is utterly foreign to his conception. This, by the way, is completely in line with the view of the **Draft Letter** that literature must be something beyond the ideological sphere if it is to reflect life.

The Marxist view of literature becomes reduced to isolated comments and phrases. Indeed, since he denies the existence of a consistent materialist or Marxist theory of literature, he is denying that there is a context to relate the comments to. In any case, as we shall see on the issue of Balzac, he really goes to extremes in tearing out of context any phrase which excites him by seeming to confirm some pet view of his.

What Is Needed by Revolutionary Writers?

How will revolutionary literature develop?

Should every writer first study to be a literary theorist and critic? Is the important thing to develop a "full literary theory"? But, according to the **Draft Letter**, whose main author was "Discontented", after 100 years no such consistent theory exists. Should we wait another 100 years before writing anything?

Or should revolutionary activists actually write works and throw themselves into the struggle? Should they study revolutionary theory, and should they study the way the class struggle is developing, the mood among the masses, the current state of revolutionary organization, and examples from other countries? Or should they get bogged down in every conceivable full literary theory in the world, a path that has led to few literary works of any sort, revolutionary or bourgeois?

Of course theory will continue to develop. But the basic materialist stand on literature already exists. In all likelihood, further development will mainly come in conjunction with the development of revolutionary struggle. As Lenin pointed out, "...correct revolutionary theory ... assumes final shape only in close connection with the practical activity of a truly mass and truly revolutionary movement." (**"Left-wing" Communism, An Infantile Disorder**, Ch. II)

Going Beyond Ideology

Another theme in "Discontented's" letter is his defense of the theories of the **Draft Letter** about literature going beyond ideology. As is his custom, as we have seen in the case of his denigration of materialist theory on literature, he proceeds along two directions. On one hand, he denies that he would do such a dastardly thing. And on the other he argues at length that literature does indeed go beyond ideology.

First he protests indignantly that he has been lied about again. He writes:

"For my part, I agree with the basic stands of Marx, Engels, and Lenin toward literary phenomena. Of course, this means I completely concur with the classic position that literature is both a class and an ideological phenomena. I have always maintained this view. As proof of it, I offer the **Draft Letter**. (Please take care, however, to distinguish between the actual **Draft Letter** and my respected opponent's commentary upon it, which succeeds in 'discovering' every conceivable anti-Marxist position in it.)" (pp. 45-6, underlining as in the original)

Here he poses as the most orthodox of the orthodox. Why, you would hardly remember that he "agree[s] with the basic stands of Marx, Engels, and Lenin toward literary phenomena" only after having stated that he doesn't recognize these stands as being a consistent line on literature and only after stating that it is Aristotle, Kant, Hegel and Diderot who set the standards for a "full" literary theory.

But it gets better yet.

In the very same paragraph where he beats his breast about how he upholds that literature is an ideological phenomena, he goes on to state that

"What the **Draft Letter** rejected, and what I still reject, is that literature can be analyzed as if it were merely a political and ideological phenomena and primarily a political and ideological phenomena, as if it were merely a component of the ideological and political struggle in the same way that a piece of agitation or propaganda is." (p. 46, col. 1, underlining as in the original)

So it turns out that literature is not primarily an ideological phenomena. This means that literature is primarily something else. This means literature goes beyond ideology.

So the **Reply** didn't lie about "Discontented's" stands. On the contrary, the **Reply-Part Two** had carefully pointed out that the **Draft Letter** was

willing to admit that "ideology might have some role. Presumably it might be acceptable for such activities as condemning a Rambo movie. But the real profound issues of literature allegedly go way beyond such crudities as ideology." (**Supplement**, Jan. 1988, p. 7, col. 2) So when the **Draft Letter** advocated that literature went beyond ideology, it meant that ideology might play some role, but a minor one. That's the meaning of the concept of transcending or going beyond ideology.

"Discontented" says that literature is not primarily an ideological phenomena. This is like saying that physics and chemistry are scientific phenomena, but not primarily part of science.

This means that he denies that literature is part of the ideological superstructure. Instead of literature and art being among the chief ideological forms used by humankind to deal with the world, the **Draft Letter** says that ideology is simply a minor aspect of literature. This is quite different from the materialist concept of ideology. Marx for example, talks of

"...the legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophic, in short, ideological, forms in which men become conscious of this conflict [in the economic base] and fight it out." (Marx's **Preface to the Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy**)

As well, just as the **Draft Letter** did, "Discontented" presents ideology as consisting solely of direct agitation and propaganda, taken in the narrowest sense. Here again, just as in the **Draft Letter**, he mentions political and ideological in the same breath in order to emphasize his narrow view of ideology. He doesn't even try to deal with the view that literature is ideological precisely because it reflects life. For him, ideology is only political ranting and raving. For that reason, he accuses me of being guilty of holding the

"view that all literature merely consists in authors mouthing off their political and ideological opinions..." (p. 45, col. 2)

"Discontented" goes on and states that:

"The **Draft Letter** was arguing against a crude and mechanical application of methods of ideological and class analysis in literature. The **Draft Letter** was arguing not for abandoning class and ideological analysis, but for taking up literary analysis." (p. 46, col. 1)

Here again we have "Discontented's" typical hypocrisy: He vehemently states that he is only against a "crude and mechanical application" of the materialist view of ideology. But it immediately turns out that "literary analysis" begins where ideology ends. The "crude and mechanical application" of materialism turns out to be applying

materialism at all once one gets to the really important part of literature. Why, materialism might be OK for leaflets or for criticizing Rambo films. But not for dealing with the really important part of literature.

"Discontented" claims that the analysis of "romanticism" in the **Draft Letter** was a "concrete example" that showed how he "refers to the class and ideological nature" of romanticism at "every turn". Far from being a "concrete example", the presentation of romanticism was an absurd series of arbitrary statements. Apparently the authors of the **Draft Letter** felt that any slop could be fed to the revolutionary activists. Aside from that, the purpose of the passage on romanticism was to prove that different classes can use the same literary devices. Oh, what a great discovery.

From this discovery the **Draft Letter** proceeded to imply that literature goes beyond classes. This is because the important part of literature is supposed to be the various literary devices, it is these devices and styles that define literary trends according to "Discontented", and these devices can be used by writers with differing views or from differing classes. Both reactionaries and progressives can write novels about a hero conquering difficulties, and such things are what define the important part of literature for "Discontented". Oh what profundity! What class analysis!

Making the sign of the cross to ward off criticism, the **Draft Letter** at this point says

"While literature is not above class, the trends and styles of literature cannot be assumed to belong by nature to one class or another..." (**Supplement**, Nov. 87, p. 24, col. 2)

In other words, literature "is not above class", oh no, but the trends and styles which "Discontented" takes to be the important part of literature are indeed above class. The very next sentence after this muddle is the one that casts doubt on the existence of bourgeois trends.

So "Discontented" is citing the very passages used to claim that literature transcends ideology as evidence of his belief in the "class and ideological nature" of literature. What a farce! The only "class" and "ideological" aspect of this analysis was it could use terms like "petty bourgeois" and "feudalism" and "bourgeois monarchy". For decades, liberal anti-Marxist writers and other diehard anti-materialist critics haven't shrunk from such terms "at every turn". These terms prove nothing: it is the content of the analysis that shows whether it is materialist. But true to form, "Discontented" thinks that the "ideological-political" approach can be identified with "mouthing off" with terms like "petty-bourgeois" and "reactionary"

and "socialist". That's all it's supposed to take to give a "Marxist" analysis "at every turn".

Theoretically, "Discontented's" views on how literature transcends ideology are one complete muddle. This was explained in some detail in the **Reply to the Draft Letter--Part Two** (Supplement, 25 Jan. 1988). If I have time, I would like to be able to write another part of this series in order to go a little further into this by dealing with the great discovery by the **Draft Letter** of "literature as literature" or, as "Discontented" puts it in Latin, literature "sui generis". This is something like rediscovering the wheel. This is equivalent to the discovery of "war as war", i.e. that war has technical aspects as well as its aim. If it proves that literature transcends classes, it would prove the same thing about war or politics or the building of the state machine or any other human (or inhuman) activity at all. Elevating the technical aspects above the content of literature amounts to taking the viewpoint of "art for art's sake". It contradicts the criterion of life that the **Draft Letter** claimed to hold. One might say that it is one of the "classical" arguments of the "art for art's sake" school of thought.

The Example of Balzac

The **Draft Letter** needed to find an example of how literature could transcend ideology. So it picked the 19th century novelist Balzac. It stated:

"...Balzac ... 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."

I was quite happy with the example of Balzac. I asked "in what did Balzac's realism consist?" and showed that Balzac's work contradicted the teachings of the **Draft Letter**. While the **Draft Letter** asked that revolutionary writers "advance beyond" the "plotting a book or file onto a political-ideological grid", Balzac openly and consciously used such a grid to examine France. The accuracy of his grid and of his examination of French society was at the heart of the value of his work. If the authors of the **Draft Letter** are serious in admitting that this resulted in a "accurate and truthful" depiction of reality, of life, then it would suggest that revolutionary artists should throw aside the advice about avoiding the "political-ideological grid".

Nor did he keep his views and politics out of his work--if anything, he is one of the great opinionated writers of world literature. In order to achieve his realism, did he suppress his social and political views? Not at all. He trumpeted his views in his novels. In so far as his views probably oriented him to look closely into the development of capitalism in France, these views cannot be divorced so easily from whatever value his novels may have. This suggests that a lively interest in politics, in the broad sense of the word of course, may be beneficial to writers, as it was to Balzac. Of course, the backward and reactionary side of his views did affect his novels and weaken their realism.

Did Balzac Leave His Opinions Out of His Novels?

But "Discontented" thinks he has an ace up his sleeve. "Discontented" doesn't believe that materialism is the needed "full" theory of literature, but he reduces Marxism to a series of isolated "remarks" taken out of context. And he is ecstatic because, you see, Engels said in a draft of a letter

"The more the opinions of the author remain hidden, the better for the work of art."

"Discontented" goes on to suggest that Balzac was a great realist precisely because he hid his opinions.

This is the one concrete assertion about literature that "Discontented" makes in his new letter. This is the conclusion of his profound and deep study. Hide your views--the alleged essence of literary wisdom.

For sure, this is one "remark" that "Discontented" has followed. He hid the **Draft Letter** and his views on literature. And, as we have seen, he is still playing hide-and-seek about his views on Marxist-Leninist theory, on ideology, etc.

"Discontented", who lays claim to being a master of concrete analysis who is valiantly fighting those doctrinaires, argues for his views on Balzac and on literature by simply quoting a few sentences from Engels out of context. He jumps and dances

"On the other hand, ... the respected Central Committee member merely brushes aside Engels' assessment of Balzac. Why? Why does the Central Committee member, who insists there is a 'full' Marxist-Leninist theory of literature, who insists that he upholds the 'classical' positions, why does he not tell us about Engels' 'materialist assessment' of Balzac? Is it because Engels'

remarks that 'The more the opinions of the author remain hidden, the better for the work of art'? Is it because Engels' remarks that 'The realism I allude to may crop out even in spite of the author's opinions.' Is it because Engels concludes: 'That Balzac was thus compelled to go against his own class sympathies and political prejudices ... that I consider one of the greatest triumphs of Realism, and one of the grandest features in old Balzac.' Given the Central Committee member's view that all literature merely consists in authors mouthing off their political and ideological opinions--dressed out in suitable 'imagery', to be sure--no doubt Engels' statements make him a touch uneasy. (Given that my respected opponent is trying to whip up a campaign to drum me out of the revolutionary movement merely because I agree with Engels' views and disagree with his, no doubt he is a little reticent to refer to Engels' 'materialist assessment.') If I may offer some advice: don't try to sweep the difference under the rug..." (p. 45, col. 2, emphasis added)

In his whole tirade, a few things are missing. "Discontented" doesn't dare explain in his own words what conclusions he draws from Engels' statements. He doesn't dare even repeat the assertions of the **Draft Letter**. He is going to be "safe" and "classical" and just quote some sentences. How can anyone oppose him? Why, that's opposing Engels.

The implication of what he writes is that Balzac succeeded in transcending classes by hiding his opinions. It wasn't Balzac's study of the class realities of France that accounted for his realism, not at all, it was his hiding of his views.

The Truth About Balzac

"Discontented" hopes to get away with this fraud because few comrades have read Balzac. In fact, Balzac shouts his views from the rooftops. It's quite obvious from his novels. I doubt that this is even controversial among the legions of Balzac critics, no matter how much they differ on everything else. But in any case, all one has to do is read Balzac oneself.

Even "Discontented" probably realizes this. At the Jan. 18 forum in Buffalo on the literary debate he "triumphantly" cited Engels about Balzac in the above spirit (but far more briefly). He was asked whether he himself believed--not Engels, but "Discontented" himself--that Balzac kept his views out

of his novels. He waffled. He appeared to be "a touch uneasy". So it turned out that he was citing Engels in grand tones as authority for a view that he himself was unwilling to endorse. Is this a honest method of investigating literary questions? Is this an honest and straightforward way of using quotations?

And Engels' View of Balzac?

If Engels had asserted that Balzac kept his views out of his novels, then it would be a mistake. Marx and Engels and Lenin are truly exceptional for the consistency and accuracy of their work over decades. But they were not superhuman. A mistake on a particular issue in a draft of one letter is hardly a big deal. Nor does one study Marxism by just accumulating "remarks" without thinking.

But Engels wasn't mistaken. He said the exact opposite of what "Discontented" presents. True, Engels' draft letter is not so easy to read. It was not written for publication (nor do I know why he didn't send it). It, and certain other letters, deals with the concrete assessments of the state of bourgeois and socialist culture at the time, and it is not at all obvious today what was going on back then. Nevertheless, as one studies Engels' draft letter, it turns out that much of it was written almost as if he were issuing a warning against the views of "Discontented".

Let's begin by putting back an additional sentence of Engels' which "Discontented" just innocently forgot about and omitted. Engels wrote that:

"Well, Balzac was a Legitimist [a monarchist]; his great work is a constant elegy on the irretrievable decay of good society; his sympathies are all with the class doomed to extinction."

What is an "elegy"? It is a lament for the dead, or a mournful description of the present situation. For example, funeral orations when one gives one's opinion of great tragedy of the death of a beloved one. This is hardly an example of literature where the author leaves out his opinions.

So Engels actually said that Balzac was a monarchist whose books were a constant lamentation on the decline of monarchist society. His works were full of the sympathy with the class doomed to extinction. And this is precisely true.

It seems to me that this probably clarifies what Engels meant when he stated that:

"The realism I allude to, may crop out even in spite of the author's opinion."

This wasn't an assertion that an author's views have no effect on the important part of his work.

It was an assertion that a writer may be a realist, "in spite of" the author trumpeting his opinions to the sky, just like Balzac did. It is a slap at the widespread notion that the defining feature of realism is the lack of viewpoint or opinions.

Engels follows this statement by making several points. One is the sentence discussed above that the work of Balzac is an elegy on the decline of good society. The other is that Balzac was extremely accurate concerning the history of French society. On this subject, Engels wrote:

"...Balzac whom I consider a far greater master of realism than all the Zolas passés, présents et à venir [past, present and future], in **La Comédie Humaine** [a cycle of about 90 novels] gives us a most wonderfully realistic history of French 'Society,' describing, chronicle-fashion, almost year by year from 1816 to 1848, the progressive inroads of the rising bourgeoisie upon the society of nobles ... He describes how the last remnants of this, to him, model society gradually succumbed before the intrusion of the vulgar moneyed upstart, or were corrupted by him...;... and around this central picture he groups a complete history of French society from which, even in economic details ... I have learned more than from all the professed historians, economists and statisticians of the period altogether."

To me, this passage indicates that it is Balzac's accuracy, his mastery of the actual evolution of French society, which was the key to his realism. Engels praises him as more accurate than historians, economists and statisticians.

(Oh horrors! Is Engels calling him a realist precisely because his work can be read as a "sociological treatise" on French society? After all, "Discontented" ridiculed the materialist assessment of Tolstoy by claiming that it

"...mistakes a political assessment for a literary one ...[by coming]... to the conclusion that Tolstoy's work is of interest only because it can be read as a sort of sociological treatise on 19th century Russia." (p. 45, col. 1)

Perhaps "Discontented" will explain to us why Lenin's comments on Tolstoy can be ridiculed as only referring to Tolstoy as a sociologist, while Engels remarks on Balzac's realism are an example of the true literary analysis. Or will "Discontented" discover that Engels too should be ridiculed now that the true meaning of his statement of Balzac is being brought forward?)

Due to his realism, Balzac not only showed the disintegration of the aristocracy, but even

portrayed "the real men of the future" in the left-wing representatives of the masses. (This does not mean, however, that he wanted their victory.) But I suspect that this portrayal of the "men of the future" is actually an exception in Balzac's work, contained in at most a few places. It was not in the handful of Balzac's novels I read--although they included many eulogies of the glories of the "men--and women--of the past", so to speak. It probably was the crowning point of realism in Balzac--but precisely that, the crowning point, and not typical.

By the way, what is the ideological significance of Balzac's writings?

In my view, it lies first and foremost in what he depicted, in what he showed about what was happening in the triumphant bourgeois society in France. His monarchist raving, annoying as it can be, is not the key issue.

In "Discontented's" view of the world, the ideological significance would lie in what Balzac "mouthed off". Hence the important part of Balzac would go beyond this ideology or "mouthing off". And "Discontented" identifies this important part with literature "as literature" or literature "sui generis" or with "the literary and artistic" side of the work. He presents that there is "mouthing off" and then there is literary technique and literary issues.

But I think that the overall picture drawn by Balzac, a picture which is far beyond simple "mouthing off", is actually completely tied in with class issues, with the "ideological-political grid", and with ideology. So I disagree with the separation of literary works into ideological "mouthing off" and real artistic work. (However, of course I would not deny that there are bad literary works which really are just "mouthing off".)

Realism and the Struggle of the Working Class

But the fun has just begun. If one wants to see what Engels meant about "hiding views", one has to examine more than just the part of his letter on Balzac. After all, Engels gave Balzac as a counter-example to oppose taking his statement too far.

It turns out that Engels' letter deals with the book **City Girl** by Margaret Harkness, who he was writing to. He thought this was, overall, a fine work, and he praised it. But he did make a criticism of it. And it is this criticism which is the context for all that followed it in the letter.

He wrote that:

"If I have anything to criticize, it would be that perhaps after all, the tale is not quite realistic enough. ... In the

City Girl the working class figures as a passive mass, unable to help itself and not even making any attempt at striving to help itself. All attempts to drag it out of its torpid misery come from without, from above. Now if this was a correct description about 1800 or 1810,..., it cannot appear so in 1887 to a man who for nearly fifty years has had the honor of sharing in most of the fights of the militant proletariat. The rebellious reaction of the working class against the oppressive medium which surrounds them, their attempts--convulsive, half-conscious or conscious--at recovering their status as human beings, belong to history and must therefore lay claim to a place in the domain of realism."

For Engels, a realistic work should show the working class in struggle, and not just as a suffering class.

But, at the Jan. 18th forum in Buffalo and elsewhere, "Discontented" denounced such criteria. They are supposedly an example of imposing political criteria on literature. They are another example of the dread "political-ideological" method.

The Criticism of the Play on the Homeless

This came up in his diehard opposition to any criticism of the "play on the homeless" (which is comrade Poyas' play entitled Whoever is in a hurry will never stop for me (the sudden adoration of so-called friends)). This criticism appeared in the article **Literature and the Class Struggle**. It pointed out that:

"The play, in essence, presents the working class as a suffering class, but not as an active class. There was nothing about the struggle of the homeless, which is rudimentary at the present but not nonexistent. There was no connection to any struggle at all. The effect was not good.

"But the image of the working class as a suffering class does not go beyond what the liberal bourgeoisie will accept. What was new in the theory of Marx and Engels was not the recognition of the suffering of the working class, but of its revolutionary character." (**Supplement**, 20 August 1987, pp. 11-12)

Now opinions can differ over individual literary works. This was pointed out in the article **Literature and the Class Struggle** itself. But this does not mean that it is forbidden to discuss plays and give opinions.

In this context, the main point of interest here is not whether the play is good or bad, but whether it is permissible to examine how the play depicts the working class. "Discontented" did not simply disagree with other comrades who criticized the play, but he refused to treat such criticism seriously. He denounced such criticism as an obvious blunder against the proper methods that should be used in literary analysis. It was not a question of whether this criticism was true or false, but that it was supposedly an example of the dread "political-ideological" method, of doctrinairism, of failing to make literary analysis, and so forth.

But it turns out that this criticism is quite similar to Engels' approach in the letter cited by "Discontented" himself. Since "Discontented" is urging the importance of this letter upon us in the strongest possible fashion, since he includes it in his list of the most important Marxist works on literature, and since he charges that I am persecuting him for agreeing with this letter, then why is he so silent about what it contains? Does he think it was correct for Engels to regard whether a work showed the working class in struggle as an issue of realism, while it is incorrect for the revolutionaries of the present to do so?

Of course, Engels thought that **City Girl** was overall a good work, while I think that the play on the homeless was overall a poor work. But then again, even the things that Engels praises about **City Girl** go against the views of "Discontented". For example, he praises the "courage of a true artist" in violating "respectability" by exposing why the Salvation Army has a hold over the masses.

What, is this the dread consideration of literature as a "sociological treatise" all over again? And right in the middle of a story of love betrayed! How could Margaret Harkness, the author, do such a thing? How could Engels praise it? This "sociological treatise" approach ("Discontented's" new term for what the **Draft Letter** called the "political-ideological" approach) is one of "Discontented's" no-no's that he would ban from the practice of writers and literary critics.

Stop, it may be said, Engels did not necessarily think that every work had to show the working class in struggle. He was not mechanical and rigid. He wrote:

"I must own, in your defense, that nowhere in the civilized world are the working people less actively resistant, more passively submitting in fate than in the East End of London. And how do I know whether you have not had very good reasons for contenting yourself, for once, with a picture of the passive side

of working class life, reserving the active side for another work?"

But then again, the article **Literature and the Class Struggle** made the same point. It stated that:

"Of course, although proletarian literature as a whole should show the struggle of the working class, this does not mean that every individual item of literature shows sharp clashes."

It went on to consider whether the play on the homeless might have other things that would save it as a good work.

On Depicting the Struggle

One thing remains from Engels' draft letter. This is his statement that

"I am far from finding fault with your not having written a point blank socialist novel, a 'Tendenzroman' [tendency novel] as we Germans call it, to glorify the social and political views of the author. This is not at all what I mean. The more the opinions of the author remain hidden, the better for the work of art."

By saying this Engels stresses that his criticism of **City Girl** is not that comrade Harkness should have lectured to the reader. He thought that it went against realism to depict the working class without struggle. An image of the working class struggle should have been created.

However, Engels was not against all tendency novels and plays either. Elsewhere he presents various tendency writers as making a contribution, but here too he advocates that the "tendency" should spring from the action of the literary work, and not from arbitrary lectures tacked on to it.

In dealing with literary creation, our Party too has made use of the idea that the ideology should flow from the action, and not just be stated. This, by the way, is also implicit in the view, ridiculed for some reason by "Discontented", that writers strive to express things in "images". The

writer aims at creating a vivid image of the world to the reader.

It can be noted that this principle often applies to leaflets as well as stories, plays and other literary works. "Discontented" appears to regard leaflets as the crude and uncultured realm of "mouthing off". But good leaflet writing is an art in itself. It involves knowing one's audience intimately. It involves not just telling the reader something, but considering what images will appeal powerfully to the reader, will strike a chord in him, will inspire the conviction needed to make him take the risk to carry the leaflet into his workplace, show it to his coworkers, etc. A leaflet may carry logical or theoretical argumentation, but it often carries particular images.

Naturally, the advice to writers to show what is happening in the world, not just lecture on it, doesn't mean that all statements of views must always be kept out of literature. For one thing, if one depicts a demonstration, for example, there will be the slogans and arguments that take place at the mass action. Then again, there are different types of literature, songs, etc. An important part of our cultural work does involve setting slogans and political stands to music. This involves setting forward a political stand explicitly and in some detail as well as also using images.

But wait. I am qualifying Engels' statement. Is this a violation of the spirit of Marxism?

But then again, Engels also qualified his statement. As if he had "Discontented" right in front of him, he immediately used the example of Balzac to show that whether one put forward one's opinions wasn't the key issue. The issue was whether one realistically reflected what was going on in the world with accuracy (and artistry).

So it turns out that the idea behind Engels' statements, statements which "Discontented" contends so bitterly are being ignored, have been at the base of much of our Party's literary and cultural work over the years. I have heard discussion of these issues over the years, and I don't think "Discontented's" letter has added anything to this except liquidationist distortion. <>

REFERENCE MATERIAL:
From a Draft of a Letter from Engels to Margaret Harkness
Beginning of April 1888

Dear Miss H[arkness],

I thank you very much for sending me through Messrs. Vizetelly your City Girl. [City Girl: A Realistic Story by Margaret Harkness, who wrote novels under the pseudonym John Law.] I have read it with the greatest pleasure and avidity. It is, indeed, as my friend Eichhoff your translator calls it, ein kleines Kunstwerk [a small work of art]; to which he adds, what will be satisfactory to you, that consequently his translation must be all but literal, as any omission or attempted manipulation could only destroy part of the original's value.

What strikes me most in your tale besides its realistic truth is that it exhibits the courage of the true artist. Not only in the way you treat the Salvation Army, in the teeth of supercilious respectability, which respectability will perhaps learn from your tale, for the first time, why the Salvation Army has such a hold on the popular masses. But chiefly in the plain unvarnished manner in which you make the old, old story, the proletarian girl seduced by a middle class man, the pivot of the whole book. Mediocrity would have felt bound to hide the, to it, commonplace character of the plot under heaps of artificial complications and adornments, and yet would not have got rid of the fate of being found out. You felt you could afford to tell an old story because you could make it a new one by simply telling it truly.

Your Mr. Arthur Grant is a masterpiece.

If I have anything to criticize, it would be that perhaps after all, the tale is not quite realistic enough. Realism, to my mind, implies, besides truth of detail, the truthful reproduction of typical characters under typical circumstances. Now your characters are typical enough, as far as they go; but the circumstances which surround them and make them act, are not perhaps equally so. In the "City Girl" the working class figures as a passive mass, unable to help itself and not even making any attempt at striving to help itself. All attempts to drag it out of its torpid misery come from without, from above. Now if this was a correct description about 1800 or 1810, in the days of Saint Simon and Robert Owen, it cannot appear so in 1887 to a man who for nearly fifty years has had the honour of sharing in most of the fights of the militant proletariat. The rebellious reaction of the working class against the

oppressive medium which surrounds them, their attempts--convulsive, half-conscious or conscious--at recovering their status as human beings, belong to history and must therefore lay claim to a place in the domain of realism.

I am far from finding fault with your not having written a point blank socialist novel, a "Tendenzroman" [tendency novel] as we Germans call it, to glorify the social and political views of the author. That is not at all what I mean. The more the opinions of the author remain hidden, the better for the work of art. The realism I allude to, may crop out even in spite of the author's opinions. Let me refer to an example. Balzac whom I consider a far greater master of realism than all the Zolas passés, présents et venir [past, present and future], in La Comédie humaine gives us a most wonderfully realistic history of French "Society," describing, chronicle-fashion, almost year by year from 1816 to 1848, the progressive inroads of the rising bourgeoisie upon the society of nobles, that reconstituted itself after 1815 and that set up again, as far as it could, the standard of la vieille politesse française [the old French ways]. He describes how the last remnants of this, to him, model society gradually succumbed before the intrusion of the vulgar moneyed upstart, or were corrupted by him; how the grande dame whose conjugal infidelities were but a mode of asserting herself in perfect accordance with the way she had been disposed of in marriage, gave way to the bourgeoisie, who corned her husband for cash or cashmere; and around this central picture he groups a complete history of French Society from which, even in economical details (for instance the rearrangement of real and personal property after the Revolution) I have learned more than from all the professed historians, economists and statisticians of the period altogether. Well, Balzac was politically a Legitimist [a monarchist]; his great work is a constant elegy on the irretrievable decay of good society; his sympathies are all with the class doomed to extinction. But for all that his satire is never keener, his irony never bitterer than when he sets in motion the very men and women with whom he sympathises most deeply--the nobles. And the only men of whom he always speaks with undisguised admiration, are his bitterest political antagonists, the republican heroes of the Clo tre Saint Merri, the men, who at that

time (1830-36) were indeed the representatives of the popular masses. That Balzac thus was compelled to go against his own class sympathies and political prejudices, that he saw the necessity of the downfall of his favorite nobles, and described them as people deserving no better fate; and that he saw the real men of the future where, for the time being, they alone were to be found--that I consider one of the greatest triumphs of Realism, and one of the grandest features of old Balzac.

I must own, in your defence, that nowhere in the civilized world are the working people less actively resistant, more passively submitting to fate, more hébétés [dulled] than in the East End of London. And how do I know whether you have

not had very good reasons for contenting yourself, for once, with a picture of the passive side of working class life, reserving the active side for another work?

From "Marx and Engels on Literature and Art, a Selection of Writings", edited by Lee Baxandall and Stefan Morawsky, Telos Press. pp. 112-116. The entire extract, as contained there, is reproduced above. Engels wrote this draft of the letter to Harkness in English. Unfortunately the collection doesn't say how this differs from the final form of the letter (if indeed there was a final form). <>

ARTICLES IN THE SUPPLEMENT ON THE LITERARY DEBATE

August 20, 1987:

Editorial: On the literary debate
Literature and the Class Struggle

September 10, 1987:

Correspondence: Redwing on the literary debate

October 20, 1987:

Correspondence on the literary debate:
--Chairman of Prisoners United for Revolutionary Education
--From a Los Angeles supporter

November 10, 1987:

Editorial: New developments in the literary debate
Draft letter on the first issue of Struggle
In defense of revolutionary literature: A reply to the draft letter -- Part one

December 20, 1987:

Correction to the article "New developments in the literary debate"

January 25, 1988:

A reply to the draft letter -- Part two

February 20, 1988:

Correspondence on the literary debate:
Statement by one of the authors of the draft letter
and comment by the Supplement

May 15, 1988:

Correspondence on the literary debate:
"Loyal reader" on the literary debate
and comment by the Supplement

June 15, 1988:

Letter from "Discontented", the main author of the draft letter
A reply to the draft letter -- Part three (in response to the letter from "Discontented")
Reference materials: From a draft of a letter of Engels to Margaret Harkness
Plekhanov on ideology and artistry in Ibsen's plays

Reference material for Reply to the Draft Letter--Part Three
PLEKHANOV ON IDEOLOGY AND THE ARTISTIC ELEMENT IN IBSEN'S PLAYS

The following excerpts are from Plekhanov's article **Henrik Ibsen**, written on the occasion of Ibsen's death in 1906. (The complete article can be found in Vol. V of his **Selected Philosophical Works**.) In my view, the important part is not Plekhanov's opinion of whether Ibsen really is the best dramatist of his time or not, or what one thinks of Shakespeare, but the discussion of the role of ideology in Ibsen's works and the reasons for a definite frustrating element in his plays. As a person who read a lot of Ibsen many years ago, I found this article fascinating. Plekhanov's work varies in quality; it can fall in the mud as well as provide detailed elaboration that is often not available elsewhere. This work, in my view, contains some truly beautiful passages. And it provides a discussion of the role of ideology in art that may perhaps be of some use to the revolutionary artist.

It seems to me that, in the passage that begins "If I were an opponent of ideology in art...", Plekhanov writes almost as if he were dealing with the current literary debate. In a way, he was. The arguments of the **Draft Letter** against the materialist view of literature are hardly as original as "Discontented", its main author, likes to think.

Let us begin with a passage from the beginning of Plekhanov's article. (In the quotations from Plekhanov below, all boldfacing was italics in the original.)

* * * * *

In the person of Henrik Ibsen (born in 1828) we have lost one of the most eminent and most attractive writers of contemporary world literature. As a dramatist he probably has no peer among his contemporaries.

Those who compare him to Shakespeare are guilty of obvious exaggeration, of course. As ar-

tistic works his dramas could not have attained the heights of Shakespeare's dramas even if he had possessed the colossal power of Shakespeare's talent. Even then they would have revealed the presence of a certain inartistic, I would even say, anti-artistic element. Anyone who reads and rereads Ibsen's dramas carefully cannot fail to notice the presence of this element in them. It is thanks to this element that his dramas, full of totally absorbing interest in some places, become almost boring in others.

If I were an opponent of ideology in art, I would say that the presence of the element in question in Ibsen's dramas is explained by the fact that they are saturated with ideas. And this remark might appear at first glance to be very apt.

But it could only appear so at first glance. Given a more attentive attitude to the matter one would have to reject this explanation as totally unfounded.

What is the right explanation then? I will tell you.

René Doumic rightly said that Ibsen's distinguishing feature as an artist was "his love of ideas, i.e., his moral inquietude, his preoccupation with problems of conscience, his need to bring all the events of daily life into a single focus". And this feature, this ideological commitment, taken in itself, is not a defect, but, quite the reverse, a great merit.

It is thanks to this feature that we love not only Ibsen's dramas, but Ibsen himself. It is thanks to this that he was able to say, as he did in a letter to Björnson of December 9, 1867, that he was in earnest in the conduct of his life. Finally, it is thanks to this that he became, as the selfsame Doumic puts it, one of the greatest teachers of "the revolt of the human spirit".

Preaching "the revolt of the human spirit" does not in itself exclude artistry. But this preaching must be clear and consistent, the preacher must understand fully the ideas that he is preaching; they must become part of his flesh and blood, they must not embarrass, confuse and hamper him in the moment of artistic creation. If, however, this essential condition is absent, if the preacher is not fully master of his ideas, and if, moreover, his

ideas are unclear and inconsistent, the ideological element will have a harmful effect on the artistic work, it will make it cold, wearisome and tedious. But note that the guilt does not lie with the ideas here, but with the artist's inability to understand them, with the fact that for some reason or other he **did not become fully ideological**. Thus, contrary to first appearances, it is not a question of being ideological, but, quite the reverse, of not being sufficiently ideological.

Preaching "the revolt of the human spirit" lent an element of loftiness and attractiveness to Ibsen's work. But in preaching this "revolt", he himself did not fully understand to what end it should lead. Therefore, as always happens in such cases, he cherishes "revolt" for "revolt's sake". And when a person cherishes "revolt" for "revolt's sake", when he himself does not understand to what end revolt should lead, his preaching inevitably becomes **vague**. And if he thinks in images, if he is an artist, the vagueness of his preaching is bound to lead to insufficient distinctness in his images. The element of abstraction and schematism will invade his artistic works. And this negative element is undoubtedly present, to their great detriment, in all Ibsen's ideological dramas.

Let us take **Brand**, for example. Doumic calls the morality of **Brand** revolutionary. And it is undoubtedly so, in that it "revolts" against bourgeois vulgarity and half-heartedness. Brand is the sworn enemy of all opportunism, and considered in this light he is very similar to the revolutionary, but only similar and only in this light. Listen to his speeches. He thunders:

**Come thou, young man--fresh and free--
Let a life-breeze lighten thee.
From this dim vault's clinging dust.
Conquer with me! For thou must
One day waken, one day rise,
Nobly break with compromise;--
Up, and fly the evil days,
Fly the maze of middle ways,
Strike the foeman full and fair,
Battle to the death declare!**

This is quite well put. Revolutionaries willingly applaud such speeches. But where is the foeman whom we must "strike full and fair"? For what precisely are we to declare battle to the death? What is the "all" which Brand in his ardent preaching sets against "nothing"? Brand himself does not know. Therefore, when the crowd calls out to him: "Show the way, and we will follow!" he can offer them only the following program of action:

**Over frozen height and hollow,
Over all the land we'll fare,
Loose each soul-destroying snare
That this people holds in fee.
Lift and lighten, and set free,
Blot the vestige of the beast,
Each a Man and each a Priest,
Stamp anew the outworn brand,
Make a Temple of the land.**

Let us see what we have here.

Brand invites his audience to break with compromise and energetically get down to work. What is this work to be? They are to "lift and lighten" the people and loose them from the "soul-destroying snare": blotting the vestige of the beast, i.e., teaching all people to break with compromise. And what will happen when they do? Brand does not know, nor does Ibsen himself. As a result of this the fight against compromise becomes an aim in itself, i.e., it becomes aimless, and the portrayal of this fight in the drama--the journey by Brand and the crowd that is following him "over frozen height and hollow" is not artistic, but, perhaps, even anti-artistic. I do not know what impression it made on you, but it makes me think of Don Quixote: the skeptical remarks which the weary crowd makes to Brand are most reminiscent of the remarks which Sancho Panza makes to his chivalrous master. But Cervantes is laughing, whereas Ibsen is preaching. Therefore the comparison is not at all advantageous to the latter.

Ibsen attracts one by his "moral disquietude", his interest in matters of conscience, the moral nature of his preaching. But his morality is as abstract, and therefore as lacking in content, as that of Kant.

* * * * *

Plekhanov continued further. I am particularly fond of the analysis of the play **An Enemy of the People**. In general, Plekhanov shows how Ibsen fought against the stultifying atmosphere of conformity and half-heartedness and opportunism that he grew up among and that oppressed him. But Ibsen didn't see the class struggle as the way out, probably due to the undeveloped nature of the class struggle in his native Norway during his formative years. Blind to the class struggle, he did not know what was the path out of the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois marsh that he so hated.

This affected all his views. For ex-

ample, Plekhanov pointed out that Ibsen was apolitical (non-political). This was the result of his righteous anger against the petty-bourgeois and bourgeois politicians. Ibsen identified all politics with the opportunist politics of the petty-bourgeois and bourgeois politicians. It didn't occur to him that there was a revolutionary politics which had an entirely different nature.

Ibsen's apoliticalness undermined his struggle against the marsh. His attempt to espouse an apolitical liberation, an individualist liberation without the revolutionary movement, let him into a quagmire.

It seems to me that many of Ibsen's attitudes can still be seen among many people today who hate the bourgeois atmosphere but can't see the path out of it. This is particularly true in these days when the working class movement is in its agony. In general, Ibsen's stand is one of the typical attitudes in class society. And this gives an added interest to the analysis of Ibsen's plays.

Below is an excerpt from near the end of Plekhanov's article, where he points out that Ibsen's weaknesses, that harmed his literary works, helped their reception in bourgeois society.

* * * * *

...In them [Ibsen's plays] his thought remains apolitical in the broadest sense of the word, i.e., **alien to social questions**. In them he preaches the "purification of the will", "the revolt of the human spirit", but he does not know what aim the "purified will" should set itself, or against what social relations the human spirit "in revolt" should

fight. This again is a major defect, but this major defect...was also bound to promote Ibsen's success greatly in the "thinking circles" of the capitalist world. These circles could sympathize with "the revolt of the human spirit" as long as it took place for the sake of revolt, **i.e., lacked an aim, i.e., did not threaten the existing social order**. The "thinking circles" of the bourgeois class could sympathize greatly with Brand who promised:

**Over frozen height and hollow,
Over all the land we'll fare,
Loose each soul-destroying snare
That this people holds in fee,
Lift and lighten, and set free....**

But if the selfsame Brand had made it clear that he was lifting and lightening souls not only in order to make them walk over frozen height and hollow, but also in order to arouse them to take some definite revolutionary action, the "thinking circles" would have looked upon him in horror as a "demagogue" and declared Ibsen to be a "tendentious writer". And here Ibsen would not have been helped by his talent, here it would have been obvious that the "thinking circles" do not possess the receptivity necessary for the appreciation of talent.

It is now clear why **Ibsen's weakness ... not only did not harm him, but was to his advantage** in the opinion of the greater part of the reading public. The "ideal people" ... in Ibsen are vague, almost completely lifeless characters. But this was necessary for their success in the opinion of the "thinking circles" of the bourgeoisie: these circles can sympathize **only** with those "ideal people" who show nothing but a vague, indefinite striving "**upwards**" and are not guilty of a serious desire to "here on our good earth set up the kingdom of heaven". <>

**CORRESPONDENCE ON THE LITERARY DEBATE:
LETTER FROM "DISCONTENTED"**

The following document is printed in its entirety. Minor typographical corrections have been made; where the intended meaning was absolutely clear such corrections are made without any indication. The original copy used a system of abbreviations (DL for Draft Letter, S for Struggle, etc.) For ease of reading, these abbreviations, have been all been expanded. Quotations have been indented to set them off in the style frequently used in the **Supplement**. Where possible, lengthy quotations have been checked against the originals and page references have been added; this or any other addition is marked by being included in square brackets []. Comments in round parentheses () were present in the original. Underlining is as in the original. Boldfacing has been added.

A reply to this letter is contained in the article **In Defense of Revolutionary Literature-- Part III: Materialism and Marxism-Leninism or Aristotle and Kant** beginning on page 19.

The document is preceded by a cover letter from "Discontented".

March 20, 1988

Cover letter to the editor:

I submit the enclosed letter for publication under the following conditions:

1. it is printed in its entirety and without headings provided and inserted by the editor;
2. it is printed above the by-line "Discontented". (Needless to say, aside from this you have the right to refer to me in any way you choose -- indeed, you have already taken numerous liberties in this regard.)

As the letter itself clearly indicates, the present submission really discusses only one question. The further points I have to make are currently in various stages of completion. I intend, as they are finished, to submit them for publication in your journal as well. Of course, as editor, you determine what is printed. But you should know that the current submission, together with the other parts in preparation as they become complete, is being circulated by me to all those whom I have known over the years and whom I believe have an interest in this question.

Sincerely,
Discontented
[Name omitted]

To the editor of the **Workers' Advocate Supplement**,

As the main author of the **Draft Letter**, I would like to be afforded the opportunity to address the readers of the **Workers' Advocate Supplement**.

In the first place, regarding my actions in the

summer of 1985. I made a serious error in not communicating my views at that time to the leadership of the Marxist-Leninist Party. They deserved better from me, as indeed did all the members and supporters of the Marxist-Leninist Party and the supporters of **Struggle**. This was a gross failure on my part to faithfully execute the duties the Party entrusted to me. Further, once I made known my criticisms of Tim Hall's editorial in the first issue of **Struggle**, including by reading portions of the **Draft Letter** to three comrades who at that time were friends of long standing, it was especially incumbent upon me to finish the drafted letter and submit it to **Struggle**. I did not do so and this was clearly a violation of revolutionary morality, and a breach of the more general norms of principled conduct. I publicly apologize to Tim Hall for this. Finally, the editor of the **Workers' Advocate Supplement** and a Central Committee member of the Marxist-Leninist Party insist that my conduct had a detrimental effect on **Struggle** and the Party's work on the literary and cultural front. Not myself being in a position to judge this, and notwithstanding my unshaken conviction that my views are correct, I must defer to their insistence. Any harm done to the Party's literary and cultural work by my conduct in the summer of 1985 I sincerely regret.

There are several criticisms concerning the recent behavior of the **Workers' Advocate Supplement** editor and the Central Committee member polemicizing against "the discontented" that I also have to make. If discussing these requires more time and space than the discussion of my own errors, I ask my readers not to assume that this is because I feel the significance of the former outweighs that of the latter. I shall allow my reader

to ponder their relative weight for themselves. For my part, I am well aware that another's failings, however gross, can never legitimately serve as an excuse or pretext for mitigating one's own. I only seek to make a clear statement of some of my strongest objections to the conduct of this polemic by the **Workers' Advocate Supplement** editor and Central Committee member.

In the Nov. 1987 issue of the **Workers' Advocate Supplement**, the Central Committee member writes:

"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'." [the **Supplement**, Nov. 10, 1987, page 14, col. 1]

I categorically deny that I have ever proceeded in any of my actions out of a desire to attack, denounce, charge or otherwise harm the party and the revolution. The Central Committee member's remark is indecent. It is also more than a little disingenuous, since not **Struggle** but Tim Hall, in his first editorial (Spring, 1985 issue), created the impression that he grouped activist poets together with the followers of Pound and Eliot, and that he felt **Struggle** was in opposition to them.

Indeed, the editor of the **Workers' Advocate Supplement** and the CC member repeatedly assert that I attacked and denounced **Struggle**. This is not true. My criticisms, neither "attacks" nor "denunciations", were directed against certain views expressed and stands maintained in an editorial written by Tim Hall. They were not directed against **Struggle** as a whole, certainly not against its contributors nor their contributions. By misrepresenting criticism of Hall's views and approach as an "attack" and "denunciation" of **Struggle**, the **Workers' Advocate Supplement** editor and Central Committee member create the false impression that I set myself in antagonistic contradiction with the contributors to **Struggle**, their work, and, indeed, to the whole trend of proletarian literature. Not so. I am still an antagonist against the stance maintained by Hall in that first editorial, but I am not now nor have I ever been an antagonist against **Struggle**.

In the section of his **Reply-Part One** entitled "Casting aside revolutionary theory", the Central Committee member opines:

"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." (p. 17, [col. 2], Nov. 87 **Workers' Advocate Supplement**)

I certainly cannot deny that I resigned from the Marxist-Leninist Party, which I assume is the action referred to and justifying the first series of remarks cited above. Nor can I deny that I am a PhD candidate at the university, which I assume is the social status apparently linking a discussion of my views on literature with the last point concerning professorial opposition to Marxism. But I can and do deny that I have ever tried to overthrow Marxist-Leninist theory and that I ever said that this theory does not exist (!!!!).

In the Nov. 87 **Workers' Advocate Supplement**, the editor states:

"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." [page 11, col. 2, in the section "On the draft letter to **Struggle**"]

Respected comrade editor, if you consider mongering motives to impugn your opponents with the brush of counter-revolution and anti-Partyism a distortion, then you have now been presented with one particular example. If you consider repeatedly misrepresenting a criticism as an attack and denunciation a distortion, then you have another. And if you consider the filthy practice of putting obviously anti-Marxist ideas and words into the mouths of those you disagree with in order to discredit them a distortion, then you have a third.

Finally, before advancing to the issues of substance, let me clear up one further point. The **Workers' Advocate Supplement** editor has stated that the authors of the **Draft Letter** opposed an open discussion and debate. Not true. I welcome it. That does not mean, however, that I welcome participating in this debate as the "designated defender of the anti-Marxist line". It just seems to me that designating the right ideas from the wrong ones prior to the commencement of the discussion, while it facilitates organizing the spectators into appropriate cliques, also removes a

great deal of the interest and all of the point to having a debate in the first place. Nevertheless, as I am eager for the discussion, I shall labor under this disadvantage and take some solace in the knowledge that someone, after all, has to play the "heavy".

I. The Marxist-Leninist Theory of Literature

My respected opponent states in the Nov. 87 **Workers' Advocate Supplement** that there is a

"full Marxist-Leninist theory of literature" [page 17, col. 2],

although (he adds) many comrades have yet to find the time to read it. I request that the Central Committee member facilitate the study of this "full" Marxist-Leninist theory of literature by 1. providing a bibliography; and 2. setting out in a brief statement its basic features, for surely he has found the time to read and study it and can make a clear, non-polemical statement of it. Once this is done, I will of course reassess my own conclusions. But unless and until this is done, I can only continue to maintain the view I herein set forth.

After all, I am not prepared, and I do not think that it is appropriate, to abandon views which I have worked out only in the course of many years of study, study of literature, study of Marx, Engels and Lenin's remarks on literature, study of the works of other theorists who have addressed the subject. I am forced to make this assertion out of fairness to myself, since my respected opponent has any number of times attacked my intellectual honesty, declaring without proof or concern for substantiation that I copy my ideas from the bourgeois intelligentsia, am a slave to the current fashion, etc., etc. No, my good sir, the slanderous assertions and innuendos of those so carried away with self-righteous zeal that they no longer respect simple fairness and honesty -- slander I say cannot make a man's character nor pass for long as a meaningful judgement on the value of his work and ideas -- even if they succeed temporarily in defaming him, even if they succeed among those who know better.

But at the same time, I have no grand pretensions about my views. I do not for a moment believe, nor do I suggest, that every thing I think, write and say is the last word of science. I do not put it forward as nor ask that it be made obligatory, that all who are Marxist-Leninist and progressive adhere closely to it, etc. I rather offer my ideas in the manner in which I have always understood reasonable and honest people proceed in serious discussions: they express their views straightforwardly, with conviction and passion, but they do not insist that it is a matter of loyalty to

Marxism-Leninism, to the revolution, that all agree with them. They do not suggest that those who "dare" to disagree are traitors, apostates, no good copyists and bourgeois faddists. No, that to my mind at any rate, is not the attitude of honest and reasonable men. But I digress.

(1) There is no full theory of literature in the classic works of scientific socialism, the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin.

(a) In the classics, there is clearly a full theory of, say, the state or political economy: anyone familiar with Marxism can cite half-a-dozen standard, well-known and book length works which elaborate these full theories. There are no such works, there is no such elaboration of a theory of literature.

(b) In the non-classical works of socialist thinkers (for want of a better category for a rather disparate group), there are works which can reasonably be said to represent a full theory of literature, particularly, in the writings of Plekhanov and Lukacs. There is of course many another socialist thinker who has written more or less extensively on literature. But these authors are not classics, and these works do not deserve the authority of classics, although despite their authors various, and sometimes very serious political failings, these theories do merit attention and not mechanical dismissal.

(c) As well, there are full theories of literature in the non-proletarian, non-socialist philosophical tradition in the West, including most notably, Aristotle's Poetics, Hegel's Aesthetics, the aesthetical works of Kant and Diderot. These works form an essential part of the classical heritage which the historical culture of mankind has bequeathed to the proletariat and scientific socialism. They must be studied and highly valued, but they must be critically assimilated to the dialectical and historical materialist outlook. In no sense can they be said to represent a Marxist-Leninist theory of literature.

But in another sense, the aesthetics, or theories of literature, found in historical culture do establish classical standards. In the sense, that is, that these works deal with a series of questions and issues which have become essential and fundamental to the theory of literature as it is understood today. It is obligatory for serious thinkers and workers in this field either to address these essential and fundamental issues, or to demonstrate how in reality these issues are not essential and fundamental for a scientific theory of literature. Included among these fundamental issues are the following: a comprehensive (not exhaustive nor detailed, but a general and basic) analysis of previous literature and its relationship to other intellectual/artistic endeavors in various historical

periods; a general theory of aesthetics, which includes a discussion of the relationship between artistic creativity and aesthetic apprehension and enjoyment, on the one hand, and the general categories of thought, cognition and ideology, on the other; a general discussion of how, within the given philosophical system, literature is defined, set off from other ideological realms, functions in interaction with these realms and with social life, etc.

I will stop with just those three issues. I am confident that anyone acquainted with aesthetics and the theory of literature will confirm that these issues are indeed fundamental and basic topics in the field, that any theory which merits the title "full theory of literature" must address these issues. But I am prepared to be corrected. However, for the moment, the question is do we find that the classic works of Marx, Engels and Lenin address these issues? In my view, they do not. Only in regards to the first issue, analysis of previous literature, do Marx and Engels come close to elaborating a full position. This is because Marx and Engels "worshipped high culture" (to borrow the metaphor of my respected opponent) and time and again return to and commented upon the historical literature that they loved and studied all their lives. These comments represent a most significant indication of their views on historical literature. But nevertheless, neither Marx nor Engels nor Lenin ever sets up to make a comprehensive and basic statement of their views on this issue. Even less is this the case as regards the other two issues.

Marx and Engels time and again returned to the relationship of the superstructure in general to the economic base. They remarked in general about the distinctions, the differentiations which set off various realms of the superstructure from one another. But they did not define the differentia specifica of literature: i.e., they never undertook a theoretical exposition of this particular realm of the superstructure, never defined what characterizes it, never defined what sets it off from the other realms, never in detail discussed its particular relationship to the economic base of society or its manner of interreacting with the other ideological realms, etc. Nor did Lenin ever take up and address these issues.

Marx, Engels and Lenin did leave behind a theoretical treasury which provides the necessary framework for developing a theory of literature. The Marxist conception of history, the theory and method of dialectical and historical materialism, the great model of all historical investigations, Marx' Capital: this provides a general framework in which a theory of literature can be worked out, but it is not a theory of literature itself. The

remarks and comments frequently made by Marx and Engels, less frequently by Lenin, about literature, these are valuable indications of what their thinking about this particular realm was, but they do not add up to a theory of literature.

But my respected opponent's view that there is a "full Marxist-Leninist theory of literature" is shared by others. For instance. B. Krylov who wrote the Preface to the 1978 Progress Publisher's collection, **Marx and Engels On Literature And Art**, writes:

"The founders of scientific communism...elaborate a fundamentally new system of aesthetical science."

I agree that the standpoint of Marx and Engels was "fundamentally new", i.e. revolutionary; I disagree that they elaborate a "system of aesthetical science".

My view is also shared by others. For instance, Mikhail Lifshitz, a Soviet aesthetician who was active and writing in the 1930's and '40's in the Soviet Union, who writes:

"Whatever the views of the founders of Marxism concerning artistic creation, they could not deal with it as extensively as the philosophers of the preceding period had traditionally done ... The revolutionary problem of Marx and Engels consisted in finding a means of breaking away from purely ideological criticism of the social order, and in discovering the everyday causes of all manifestations of man's activities. In dealing with questions of art and culture, the importance of Marxist theory would be immense even if nothing were known about the aesthetic views of the founders of Marxism. Fortunately, however, this is not the case. In their works and correspondence there are many remarks and entire passages expressing their ideas on various phases of art and culture. As aphorisms, they are profound and significant, but, like all aphorisms, they admit of somewhat arbitrary interpretation. It is at this point that the work of the scholar begins. He must connect these remarks with the general development of Marxism. Marx's aesthetic views are integrally bound up with his revolutionary world outlook. They have more than a mere biographical significance, although for various reasons we possess only fragments of his thoughts on art." (**The Philosophy of Art of Karl Marx**, pp. 10-11)

I believe that Lifshitz is correct. His remarks

reflect the conclusions of a scientific investigator and student, as it was Lifshitz who, true to his word, first performed the task of culling and assembling all the remarks made by Marx and Engels on literature and art from their voluminous writings. (Subsequent Soviet editions of collections of these remarks, including Progress Publishers, are all indebted to, indeed would not have been possible without the work of Lifshitz.) Of course, although Lifshitz' remarks deserve respect and enjoy the authority of a scientific investigator's views, they are not the last word on the subject.

Indeed, my point is not to argue that one position is Marxist-Leninist and the other is anti-Marxist. That is the way I find my respected opponent proceeds at every turn, and hence, almost at every turn, distorts the genuine nature of other differences. I for one refuse to strap on his blinders and follow mechanically in his tortured footsteps. My point is rather that here we have two different assessments: one view declares that in the classics there is a "full theory of literature", the other view maintains that there is no "full theory" although there are invaluable fragments and statements indicating the views and standpoints of Marx, Engels and Lenin. The issue, then, is one of correctness or incorrectness, truth or falsity, right or wrong -- it is not an issue of loyalty or apostasy as, say, the issue of upholding the historical necessity for the dictatorship of the proletariat is. The question, therefore, can only be settled in the manner of all scientific questions: by investigation and thought, by reading the remarks of Marx, Engels and Lenin on literature, by reading literature, by reading the remarks of other thinkers on literature. It cannot be settled in the manner of religious disputes, by a statement of the principles one lives by, the beliefs one subscribes to. My respected opponent clearly thinks differently, as he writes in the Nov. 87 **Workers' Advocate Supplement** (p. 17, col. 2)

"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...

"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."

My opponent wants to shift the question under discussion from the issue of the theory of literature to the issue of the general theory of Marxism-Leninism. He also wants to shift the criteria for settling the question from those of science (it does not matter, he tells us, that few have read the remarks of Marx, Engels, and Lenin on litera-

ture, oh no, that is irrelevant!!!) to those of morality and party affiliation (what matters is that some "live by" Marxist theory, i.e. they are members of the Marxist-Leninist Party I take it, whereas others "throw it aside as irrelevant", i.e. they have resigned from the party).

Perhaps now I have hit upon the secret explanation for the fact that the right ideas could be distinguished from the wrong ideas even before this debate began. It seems that holding a membership card guarantees privileged access to the former, whereas turning the card in condemns one to uphold the latter. And this is the last word in materialist science!

(2) So far, my remarks have been limited to arguing a negative point: there is no full theory of literature to be found in the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin. That view seems little more, to my mind, than a convenient fiction which allows those who maintain it to fob off their own views, often enough ill-informed and vulgar, as a classic of Marxism-Leninism.

What, then, do we possess from the classics? I posed this question at the outset for my opponent, and I meant it seriously, not rhetorically. My own view is that we possess the following works which are the most important and pertinent for working out a theory of literature:

a. There are works of a more general nature which speak to the basic historical materialist approach to ideology and culture:

1. Marx's **Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy**;
2. Engel's **Ludwig Feuerbach**;
3. Engel's letters to various persons in the late '80s and '90s of the last century, such as his famous letter to Bloch of Sept. 21-2, 1880, his letter to Mehring of July 14, 1893, and other letters in which he opposed Paul Barth's views especially and warned against mechanical applications of the materialist method in general;
4. Lenin's **Tasks of the Youth Leagues**.

In addition, special mention must be made of the works of Marx and Engels in the '40s: **The Holy Family**, **German Ideology** and the **Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts**.

b. There are specific letters and comments on literature which are especially important. Most prominent among these, in my view, are the following: Marx's comments on Goethe; Marx's famous comments on Greek art from the **Contribution**; Marx and Engels' letters to Lasalle on his play; Engels' letters to Minna Kautsky and M. Harkness, which includes his assessment of Balzac; Lenin's articles on Tolstoy.

How, then, should we utilize this material? I believe that any serious investigator in the field of literature, or any writer or serious reader, must

try to assimilate the stand of Marx, Engels, and Lenin as best he can. More generally, he should study the works of other socialists (again, using the category loosely) who have written about literature, such as Lukacs and Brecht. (As regards the latter two authors, if our would-be student of literature frequents Marxist-Leninist Party circles, he should either hide the fact that he/she reads these proscribed authors or brace himself for the inevitable consequences.)

In doing this, the investigator must in the first place try to adopt the stand and method of Marxism. In the second place, he should weigh for himself each specific judgement: he should neither treat specific judgements and assessments as the last word of "science" (since science insists on never allowing anything to remain the "last word", this inevitably leads to converting such assessments into articles of faith) nor should he casually dismiss them. Curiously, I find that my respected opponent does both. Since concrete examples are always helpful, I will discuss my respected opponent's failings in this regard in order to better illustrate the dangers which I feel should be guarded against.

In the August 87 **Workers' Advocate Supplement**, my opponent speaks as if the "materialist assessment of Tolstoy" [page 8, col. 2] -- meaning Lenin's articles, I presume -- was a cut and dried proposition long ago decided and stored away on the great shelf of Truth, to be referred to from time to time (apparently, mainly when someone strains [strays?] from the true way) but certainly not subject to further discussion and development. For my part, I have always felt and still feel that Lenin's articles are a correct assessment of the political role and stand of Tolstoy, but I have never believed that it was impermissible to take exception to this political assessment, and that doing so was sufficient to convict one of revisionism. What is more to the point, however, is that I have never taken Lenin's articles as an assessment of Tolstoy's literary achievement. In my opinion, it is because the Central Committee member mistakes a political assessment for a literary one that he comes to the conclusion that Tolstoy's work is of interest only because it can be read as a sort of sociological treatise on 19th century Russia. True, that is part of what gives it its interest; the other part is its literary and artistic merit. And on that point both Lenin and the Central Committee member were silent. (But there are still important differences between them: 1. Lenin never pretended that his views were the "last word" on Tolstoy; and 2. Lenin was well acquainted with Tolstoy, having read his work over the years, and thus possessed the necessary prerequisite of expressing an informed -- and

materialist -- assessment of his writings.)

On the other hand, in the Nov. 87 **Workers' Advocate Supplement**, the respected Central Committee member merely brushes aside Engels' assessment of Balzac. [This is presumably referring not to the Nov. 87 issue of the **Supplement** but to the passage "In What Did Balzac's Realism Consist?" in Part II of the **Reply to the Draft Letter** in the Jan. 25, 1988 **Supplement**, pp. 10-11.] Why? Why does the Central Committee member, who insists there is a "full" Marxist-Leninist theory of literature, who insists that he upholds the "classical" positions, why does he not tell us about Engels' "materialist assessment" of Balzac? Is it because Engels' remarks that

"The more the opinions of the author remain hidden, the better for the work of art"?

Is it because Engels' remarks that

"The realism I allude to may crop out even in spite of the author's opinions."

Is it because Engels concludes:

"That Balzac was thus compelled to go against his own class sympathies and political prejudices, that he saw the necessity of the downfall of his favorite nobles; and described them as people deserving no better fate; and that he saw the real men of the future, where, for the time being, they alone were to be found--that I consider one of the greatest triumphs of Realism, and one of the grandest features in old Balzac."

Given the Central Committee member's view that all literature merely consists in authors nouthing off their political and ideological opinions--dressed out in suitable "imagery", to be sure--no doubt Engels' statements make him a touch uneasy. (Given that my respected opponent is trying to whip up a campaign to drum me out of the revolutionary movement merely because I agree with Engels' views and disagree with his, no doubt he is a little reticent to refer to Engels' "materialist assessment".) If I may offer some advice: don't try to sweep the difference under the rug: own up to it, and then do some work, some reading and thinking to try to sort it out. I for one would never mistake this process, which I call reasoning, for revisionism; nor would I ever mistake the respected Central Committee member for a revisionist.

For my part, I agree with the basic stands of Marx, Engels, and Lenin toward literary phenomena. Of course, this means that I completely concur with the classic position that literature is both a class and an ideological phenomena. I have always maintained this view. As proof of it, I offer the **Draft Letter**. (Please

take care, however, to distinguish between the actual **Draft Letter** and my respected opponent's commentary upon it, which succeeds in "discovering" every conceivable anti-Marxist position in it.) There, in general form, it is repeatedly stated that literature is both a class and an ideological phenomena. There, by way of concrete example, a literary phenomena -- romanticism -- is analyzed briefly: an analysis which, although brief, at every turn refers to the class and ideological nature of this literary phenomenon. The **Draft Letter** was not arguing against ideology and class analysis. The **Draft Letter** was arguing against a crude and mechanical application of methods of ideological and class analysis to literature. The **Draft Letter** was arguing not for abandoning class and ideological analysis, but for taking up literary analysis. What the **Draft Letter** rejected, and what I still reject, is that literature can be analyzed as if it were merely a political and ideological phenomena and primarily a political and ideological phenomena, as if it were merely a component of the ideological and political struggle in the way that a piece of agitation or propaganda is. What this "forgets" is the existence of literature as literature, as a specific and distinct social activity. Although Marx, Engels and Lenin never defined what precisely specified literature, their basic works never assume that it is anything but sui generis. In this respect, I remain convinced that the **Draft Letter** does not contradict the position of the classics.

How then can it be explained that a Central Committee member of the Marxist-Leninist Party and the editor of the **Workers' Advocate Supplement** repeatedly assert, and have now come to regard as an incontrovertible and long-established fact, that the authors of the **Draft Letter** reject these basic Marxist stands? Well, really, they are going to have to answer that question if it is ever going to be answered. But somehow, I suspect that they are not going to be very forthcoming in this regard. Therefore, although I am fully conscious that I risk incurring the wrath of the righteous, I shall offer the following three possible explanations which I have come to entertain. They are not mutually exclusive, nor do they preclude other possibilities. And, I hasten to add, they are not carved in stone.

a. The Central Committee member and **Workers' Advocate Supplement** editor have consciously stooped to the level of utilizing the "big lie" technique. That is, they first reduce their opponent's arguments to a simplistic and obviously erroneous absurdity (reductio ad absurdum). Then, they take this absurd and obviously erroneous distortion and they repeat it, over and over and over and over and over again. This repetition is calculated to

induce the belief that their opponents in fact did actually maintain the ridiculous and obviously erroneous position. (For those who are unprepared to entertain this possibility, because it is near inconceivable that someone occupying the position of authority and respect which a Central Committee member of the Party and the editor of the **Workers' Advocate Supplement** occupy could stoop so low, in the first place, allow me to express my sympathy: I too originally had great difficulty in entertaining such a possibility. But I learnt otherwise, as I read some umpteen times these same respected figures repeat the gross canard that the authors of the **Draft Letter** capitulate before the promotion of the fascist literary figure Ezra Pound. If the Central Committee member and the **Workers' Advocate Supplement** editor did not hold their hands back from this shameless and disgusting slander of people who have spent their adult lives in the ranks of the revolutionary movement, if they stoop time and time again into the gutter to pick up this filth and hurl it at others, why not pick up the "big lie" while they are down there? After all, when you are throwing shit, what real difference does one turd more or less make?)

b. The Central Committee member and the **Workers' Advocate Supplement** editor have difficulty with the concept of standing upon and utilizing the principles of Marxism-Leninism to advance knowledge and arrive at new conclusions in various realms. They do not understand that this is entirely different from abandoning these principles. Instead, they perhaps believe that thinking anything not already thought in the classics is non-Marxist or even anti-Marxist. But Marx and Engels and Lenin knew well that there was more to heaven and earth than was dreamt of in their philosophy. It is an egregious error to counter-pose upholding principles to developing one's own thinking and views based on principles. In particular, the Central Committee member and the **Workers' Advocate Supplement** editor appear to think that an analysis which makes distinctions other than class distinctions is an abandonment of class analysis.

c. The Central Committee member and the **Workers' Advocate Supplement** editor make the egregious error of mistaking unity on principle with conformity of all opinion to the views held by authoritative figures in the Party. But Leninist principles, so far as I understand them, do not insist that all members and supporters of the political party of the proletariat must agree with all the opinions of the party leadership. Far from it. And yet my respected opponents go so far as to create the impression, in my mind at any rate, that they believe that anyone who disagrees with them -- and Tim Hall as well, it seems -- is ipso

facto in anti-Marxist positions.

(3) One final point needs to be appended to this discussion of the Marxist-Leninist theory of literature. Marxism-Leninism is a materialist philosophy and for materialism the first prerequisite for any serious thinking and discussion about literature, for any serious theoretical work on this -- or any other -- front, is the accumulation of a wealth of concrete knowledge. Without direct acquaintance with the subject matter discussed by the classics of Marxism-Leninism, knowledge of the theoretical conclusions of Marxism-Leninism remains superficial. To know and understand the theoretical propositions and views of Marx, Engels and Lenin on literature, it is not enough to know the classics of Marxism-Leninism, one must also know literature. To earn the right to speak authoritatively as a materialist should speak about literature, one must know literature. This demand does not reflect scholasticism, nor expertism -- although I imagine some wish to find comfort in that belief. On no, this demand is made by materialism, by the founder of scientific socialism, and by the model for all materialist investigations which he left behind.

Is it coincidence that my respected opponent and the editor of **Struggle**, Tim Hall, on the one hand proclaim:

"We have the whole scene covered because we are pure and red, the true Marxist-Leninists. Anything that those 'experts' say, anything that those 'worshippers' of high culture preach, anything that those dastardly 'professors' profess is just so much yapping against Marxism, barking against proletarian writers ("Thou shalt not write the word 'imperialism'--why it is on the lips of every bourgeois professor--which is to say, of every professor!), growling at revolutionary literature." [We do not give any page reference because this is not actually a quotation from anyone

-- Supplement]

--while on the other hand, these same individuals reveal at every turn not only an appalling ignorance of the history of literature (Tim Hall still

thinks the "Beats" are a hot item!) or of contemporary literary theory (the Central Committee member talks glibly about "current fashions", but reveals absolutely no concrete, factual knowledge), but also an incredible insensitivity to the concrete features of literature (after all, only the sociological makes Tolstoy "interesting" for the materialist) and an utter contempt and moralistic disdain for all but officially-sanctioned productions ("prissy verses of lords and ladies" indeed)? I do not think this is a coincidence. Or if it is, it is an awfully convenient one, for it relieves these "authorities", these "materialists" of the responsibility to do any concrete work, either in studying literature or in studying literary theory. One merely declares one's Marxist-Leninist purity and denounces "all that bourgeois intellectual stuff" and "Puff!"--all need to work vanishes in a cloud of red smoke which quickly dissipates to reveal--"Presto, magico!"--a "full" Marxist-Leninist theory of literature.

In my opinion, no class, no political trend, no party is automatically, by virtue of some credentials, immune from the dangers of windbagery. And there is only one antidote for the condition that I know. The windbag must be told: Puff up your bag of wind very big, paint it red, stamp on it "full Marxist-Leninist theory", thump it loud and long--it still remains a big bag surrounding a lot of hot air. And from the standpoint of materialism and science, worth less than a single, humble conclusion that a student in the field has won by dint of honest efforts.

The next part of my letter shall discuss my views on the history of the "Marxist-Leninist line" for proletarian literature. Subsequent installments shall pursue the detailed discussion of the specific theoretical questions concerning literature per se, including the following:

1. attitude to historical culture
2. the distinction between imaginative literature and publicism
3. the distinction between partisan political literature and literature as a whole
4. consciousness and ideology.

Sincerely,
Discontented<

