

WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!

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From the history of the Party: The ACWM(ML) and the resistance movement

Below is the main speech from the MLP's May Day meeting in Chicago on April 29. It has been edited for publication.

Comrades and friends,

This May Day we are also celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the American Communist Workers Movement (Marxist-Leninist), or ACWM(ML). This organization was one of the predecessors of the Marxist-Leninist Party. The ACWM(ML) had many revolutionary features. Tonight I want to concentrate on the resistance movement. Many of the things that the ACWM(ML) learned in that struggle are what continue to guide us today. When we fight the racist skinheads, when we fight the reactionary anti-abortion movement, when we fight police attacks, when we develop picket line struggles and other fights in the workplace, there are lessons from the resistance struggles of the ACWM(ML).

In 1970 ACWM(ML) waged a struggle against Vice-President Agnew, a major spokesman for the policies of the Nixon administration. He stood for going all out to suppress the mass movements. And in 1970 ACWM(ML) waged a struggle against a prominent group of reactionaries, the so-called "hard-hat movement." They were the brainchild of the Nixon-Agnew administration. They were promoted by the media and the politicians just as the racists and reactionaries are being promoted today.

The bourgeoisie responds to the mass movement

In 1970 the bourgeoisie was beset by rising revolutionary struggle. Despite hundreds of thousands of troops, massive bombings and severe repression, US imperialism was losing in Indochina. Millions of youth had poured into the streets at home to protest this war. The Black masses were in rebellion. The working class was on the move. Wildcat strikes broke out among postal workers, auto workers, truck drivers and others.

The government was intent on suppressing this movement. Thousands of activists were jailed. The FBI and red squads were working overtime spying on and trying to disrupt the movement. The police forces murdered black

activists like Fred Hampton of the Black Panther Party. They shot Fred Hampton in his sleep. Students were gunned down at Kent State and Jackson State universities and other places. The army suppressed the postal strike. The national guard suppressed the Teamsters' strike. Yet this wasn't enough. The bourgeoisie and the Nixon-Agnew government wanted to create a backlash against the masses. They wanted a fascist mass movement to aid them in suppressing the fighting masses.

Vice-President Agnew, in fact, was the main mouthpiece for doing this. He slandered protesters as "criminally insane," and an "effete corps of impudent snobs."

Listen to what Agnew said after the shootings at Kent State in May 1970

"We cannot afford to be divided or deceived by the decadent thinking of a few young people. We can, however, afford to separate them from our society -- with no

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City University of New York: CUNY students defeat tuition increase!

Reprinted from the New York Workers' Voice, paper of the MLP-NY:

Students at the 20 City University campuses won round one in their battle with the state government as their militant struggle forced [liberal Democratic] Governor Cuomo to veto (for now) the proposed \$200 tuition increase. Cuomo's 11th hour veto only came after 17 campuses erupted in struggle, after buildings were seized at 13 colleges, and after an 11-hour protest march and rally of 10,000 CUNY students and staff on May 2.

The ongoing protests are an extension of the student struggles that began April 24, when student activists at City College seized the administration building in protest over a \$200 a year tuition increase for New York state residents, and \$750 increase for out-of-state students. They are also protesting the elimination of faculty and staff positions and the deterioration of academic services.

The students' struggle has been marked by its rapidly expanding base. Building seizures have been accompanied by widespread support by the student body, staff and faculty. The students have organized marches, rallies and shut down street traffic for up to 6 hours near some of the

protesting campuses.

The May 2 march marked the height of the protests so far. Up to 10,000 students converged upon Cuomo's offices at the World Trade Center, chanting "Education is our right! Fight! Fight! Fight!" The demonstrators marched through the downtown streets to City Hall and denounced Koch, traveled to Wall Street to highlight the contrast between the financiers' wealth and the students' impoverishment, and on to the Sheraton Hotel in midtown to confront Cuomo, who had sneaked away earlier. The protest covered about 7 miles and tied up city traffic for almost 8 hours!

The extent of the protests shows the seething anger among City University students at the budget cuts proposed by Governor Cuomo and the state legislature.

Mario Cuomo is following in George Bush's and Ronald Reagan's footsteps. Eight years of Reaganism have meant eight years of cuts in social programs, eight years of wage cutting and speedup for the workers and profiteering for the rich. Cuomo's proposed cuts in the CUNY budget are fully in line with this Reaganite policy.

A majority of CUNY students are of working class background, with a large percentage of part-time student workers; many are adults supporting their own children. About 58% are national minorities. Some 40% of the students come from families with incomes of less than \$12,000 a year, while 20,000 are on some sort of public assistance.

Moreover, it is estimated that there are at least 4,500 homeless college students on CUNY campuses, living in their student lounges or club rooms. Obviously, any tuition increase is a considerable burden for a large section of CUNY students and would threaten the future education of many.

But this is of no great concern to liberal governor Cuomo, who has called on the Democratic Party to support Bush's budgetary "flexible freeze" on social programs. Obvious, when it comes to putting the squeeze on the working people, both Democrats and Republicans are agreed.

Even with the rejection of a tuition increase, the CUNY budget is still faced with an \$18 million shortfall which CUNY officials threaten to make up by deeper cuts in staff, academic courses, student services and basic maintenance on the college campuses.

For this reason, it is essential that the students keep up their protest actions, targeting both the government and the college and university administrations. It is their mass struggle which has forced Cuomo to veto a tuition increase so far. It is the mass struggle which won open admissions in 1969. It is only the mass struggle which can stop the complete gutting of affordable higher education in New

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York City.

The students should accept **NO CUTBACKS** in programs and services. More, they should keep fighting for a restoration of the cuts which have already gutted remedial programs, increased class size, and prevented students from taking even their required courses.

The student protests at CUNY are entirely just and

deserve the support of all the workers and poor in New York. There is no lack of money to support the education of the children of the working class in New York. Eight years of handouts to the rich, eight years of tax cuts for the wealthy by the Reagan-Bush administration and by the Cuomo government are proof enough. The rich should be made to pay! ■

From the Nicaraguan Workers' Press: Some brief observations on the Corona vegetable oil plant

The following is based on the account given in the February issue of Prensa Proletaria, paper of the Marxist-Leninist Party of Nicaragua:

Negotiations took place in January between the transnational firm Corona and SITRIAM, the union at Corona, whose leading board includes various forces. It includes members of the Workers' Front, the union center of the Marxist-Leninist Party of Nicaragua, and members of the CTN, the union confederation of the Social-Christians (which is one of the right-wing parties). The Sandinista union center, the CST, is not represented on the board.

SITRIAM's study on the cost of living showed that a 600% wage increase was urgent. [The inflation rate in Nicaragua is astronomical.] The workers pointed out that Corona is not, as it claims, broke; it is presently expanding its new vinegar plant. The Workers' Front stood behind the demand of a 600% increase till the end, but the company tried to hide behind the 300% ceiling on wage increases set by the Sandinista government in January.

The company also used intimidation tactics, firing 16 workers during the negotiations, including all nine of the members of the union's negotiating board. The other seven were fired at the urging of a member of the Sandinista rank-and-file committee who claimed they were stealing.

When the workers at Corona oil demanded a 600% wage increase, management replied that they couldn't afford more than 150%, at which point the negotiations stalled and were closed. The workers then demanded to see the company's financial records in order to verify its claims. In response, management went to the Labor Ministry, MITRAB, demanding--**THE FIRING** of each and every one of the union leaders who were negotiating the wage increase! The Labor Ministry gave a direct reply based on a law saying that union leaders enjoy trade union

rights; why, the law would prevent management from firing the leaders--except, of course, in the middle of negotiations or a labor dispute.

This attitude of MITRAB is explained by the interest of Sandinista unionism in dismantling a union board where different forces are represented, but where the CST and the government are not represented.

Likewise, the CTN-Huembes (CTN is headed by the ultra-right-winger Carlos Huembes) tried to convince the workers to accept the ridiculous increase of 150%, attacking the Workers' Front for supporting the economic struggle of the workers.

Finally the assembly of workers at Corona agreed to accept the factory's offer. The next day, January 24, the government announced another devaluation of an additional 15%. This shows that the workers can trust neither the government and its pro-management forces (such as its rank-and-file committees and its CST), nor the bosses and their accomplices like the CTN.

Some wage increase is inevitable because of the devaluation and the new wave of inflation--but how little will satisfy the CTN-Huembes? It is going around with the right-wing coalition of the 14 parties demanding constitutional reforms; yet it can't even demand a liveable wage for its workers at Corona.

Through the recent negotiations, the Corona workers have gained a small wage increase and much valuable experience. They have exposed both the traditional ruthless capitalist nature of the owners as well as the pro-management agents among themselves. This will strengthen their upcoming struggles to negotiate a new pact, overcome the bad working conditions, and solve the problems of transportation and of the treats carried out against them by management and backed up by the police. ■

Keep up the fight to reinstate Mark Mitchell! Mark Mitchell acquitted!

From the May 9 issue of Detroit Workers' Voice, paper of the MLP-Detroit. It also contained the article "Join the struggle in defense of abortion rights!" and notices for several demonstrations of differing types.

To the cheers and applause of family members and postal worker supporters, Royal Oak letter carrier Mark Mitchell was acquitted of the charge of felonious assault against 204B [management trainee] Dave Lerner. The acquittal, on April 28 in Oakland County Circuit Court, is a victory for Mark and the hundreds of postal workers who have supported him in his struggle against management persecution and unjust firing.

What happened at the trial

Mark has been persecuted because on Oct. 25 last year, he defended himself from 204B Lerner who grabbed him after severely harassing him. The trial, however, avoided that incident; instead it focused on an earlier incident that day between Mark and Lerner over a knife Mark has long used to cut bands on bundles. When Lerner saw the knife lying at Mark's sorting case, he seized it and tried to take it out of the unit, alleging that it was "too big." Then when Mark retrieved it, Lerner alleged that Mark made some slashing motions at him, held the knife an inch from Lerner's chin, and said, "Don't touch my shit!" This was the supposed "assault."

But testimony from witnesses including workers who had seen the incident and a former 204B who had also supervised Mark, brought out a different story. First of all, it is common practice for letter carriers to use their own knives or scissors to open bundles, and there are no known regulations restricting size. Mark had used his knife for a long time, and no supervisor prior to Lerner had raised any problem with it. Secondly, Lerner's seizing of the knife was at least the fourth time that morning that Lerner had singled out Mark for harassment. And finally, the witnesses subpoenaed by the prosecution testified that there was no evidence of "slashing" motions, but that Mark was simply trying to keep Lerner from grabbing the knife back, like a game of "keep away." Actually, they said, Mark walked away from Lerner.

Worthless testimony of the postal inspector

In a flimsy attempt to puff up Lerner's allegations, the prosecution brought in a postal inspector who had taken statements from carriers following the incidents of October 25. The postal inspector helped put together postal management's case against Mark which led to his firing. But this man's testimony only ended up exposing the bankrupt-

cy of the management case against Mark.

The inspector had absolutely nothing to say. He could not remember what the statements said, even after re-reading them to himself while on the witness stand. Then the prosecuting attorney went so far as to try to raise **Detroit Workers' Voice** as some kind of issue in the case. But the postal inspector could say only that this newsletter seemed to be "trying to drum up support" for Mark. (To which a postal worker in the courtroom muttered, "What's wrong with that!") Even the judge described the inspector's testimony as "worthless."

Judges do not usually rule in favor of the workers, but this case was so threadbare that facts could not be denied. In her summation, Judge Hilda Gage concluded that Mark had come to work on October 25th expecting a normal workday; that for some reason, unknown to her, the 204B Lerner had some vendetta against Mark; that Lerner had in essence stolen Mark's knife by seizing it; and that there was no evidence of Mark attempting to threaten or assault Lerner with the knife.

A victory for postal workers

The acquittal verdict is a victory for Mark. But it also represents a victory for the postal workers who have supported him in many ways. This support, coming mainly from **Detroit Workers' Voice** and rank-and-file workers, greatly boosted Mark's morale, and it prevented management from sweeping his case under the rug.

What's more, the struggle to defend Mark has served to develop greater unity and solidarity among the workers. It has brought together men and women, black and white, from different crafts and facilities throughout the metro area. Many, many white workers, for example, stepped forward to defend Mark, who is black, against the white 204B Lerner. The struggle has helped build the workers' fighting strength.

Keep up the fight to reinstate Mark with back pay

The acquittal shows that management's charges against Mark are groundless and that he has a strong case for reinstatement. But it does not mean that Mark automatically gets his job back. His grievance against suspension and termination appears stalled, now that it's gone beyond level 2 and is in the hands of the NALC [National Association of Letter Carriers] business agent. His EEO [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission] complaint is only in its early stages. The struggle for reinstatement with full back pay must go on.

What is absolutely essential is that we rank-and-file postal workers keep up the pressure in a mass way for

Mark's reinstatement--whether it be buttons, petitions, pickets, or other forms. We can not rely on the union bureaucracy to press the fight. The NALC local president and business agent did not even bother to attend the trial or send a representative. With all their resources, the union bureaucracy has, in fact, done very little to mobilize the workers in Mark's defense.

All for one and one for all

Mark Mitchell's struggle is one particular case of especially harsh abuse, injustice and lies on the part of postal management. But it is not the only case. In all the facilities in metro Detroit, workers are subjected to this same sort of treatment, including arbitrary suspensions and firings, as management attempts to enforce its speedup drive. That is why we say: **The defense of Mark Mitchell against management harassment is the defense of all postal workers against management harassment.** ■

Dangerous fumes at FDR postal station in New York: No to disregard for worker safety!

From the April 28 issue of New York Workers' Voice, paper of the MLP-New York. Over 200 workers at FDR have signed a petition on this issue.

Over the past two weeks and more, many workers at FDR Station have been inhaling strong smelling fumes from the construction work going on downstairs. And quite a few clerks, carriers and mail handlers have become ill from it. Management, however, does not smell or feel anything. Why, there is "good ventilation" at FDR! Or so everyone was told by a video a few weeks back.

Soon after work started, regulars, subs and casuals began complaining about dizziness, headaches, nausea and burning eyes. There were even cases of vomiting. But management still didn't notice a thing. "You may go home if you use annual leave," they said. In other words, since the "good ventilation" is taking care of the hazardous fumes, it must be that no one is really ill, but that people are just looking for vacations! But since you can't work in your condition, well, then management doesn't want you at FDR, and so you can go home. But do it on your time, using annual leave!

The chemicals being used downstairs are seriously hazardous. Warnings on the containers read as follows. "Contains polyisocyanate. Vapor and spray mist may be harmful. Use adequate ventilation. May cause eye, skin or respiratory irritation. Harmful or fatal if swallowed." "...If breathing is difficult, give oxygen and call physician." "...Do not breathe dust. May cause delayed lung injury." In addition, a number of the containers warned especially of an ingredient called toluene diisocyanate (TDI), which in a national study, "...was carcinogenic when given orally to

rats and mice at maximum tolerated doses." It is further warned that people may become permanently "sensitized" by overexposure to this substance, in which case they react to much lower levels of the ingredient.

The materials are so hazardous that in fact people working directly with the substances wear a special breathing apparatus and mask, while the level of the TDI substance must be monitored continuously with special equipment.

Yet, while fully informed of the hazards (they even had time to prepare a video) postal management decided to go ahead with the repair work, and to require employees to work quite literally next to where the dangerous materials are being used. And they have continued to insist on this even though people have become ill. As recently as yesterday morning (Thursday), one person vomited and another got a skin rash on her face.

It should be noted as well that a number of the people being exposed to these chemicals are casuals. They have no health insurance coverage, nor enough money to pay for health care. And they have no sick leave or annual leave. To them management is saying: stay and take it, ...or starve.

As usual, postal management cares about one thing: production. When it comes to issues involving health and safety, its attitude is simply to cover its ass. Management will not budge unless it fears losing production. Their true motto is: **Production first, safety last!**

Postal workers must demand safe and healthy working conditions from management. Rank-and-file action is the best way to back up these demands. ■

Correspondence: Hunger strike in Texas prisons

Below we carry excerpts from letters we have received from comrades Ana Lucia Gelabert and Alberto Aranda, who are among the leaders of the Prisoners United for Revolutionary Education (PURE), concerning their struggle against inhuman conditions in the Texas prisons. They have been using one method after another in their struggle against oppression. Their present struggle is also in solidarity with political prisoners in South Africa and West Germany. This shows the spirit of the prisoner-activists, who do not let themselves be restricted by the narrow confines of the prison cells, but seek to join their movement to the general movements for liberation.

We think that support for the South African hunger strikers is quite important. The bourgeois press has dramatically revealed its rottenness by shushing up on the atrocities of the apartheid rulers, but the workers and activists must keep up the solidarity movement for revolution in South Africa.

The hunger strikers are also opposed to the harsh conditions forced on the Red Army Faction (RAF) political prisoners in West Germany. We also condemn the ferocious policies of the West German government against the left-wing, and the anti-terrorist hysteria which it uses as a pretext for repression. We do, however, wish to point out that we vehemently disagree with the terrorist tactics of the Red Army Faction, which we believe has done much harm to the revolutionary movement in Europe.

April 17, 1989

Indefinite hunger strike enters its fourth week

The indefinite hunger strike begun on March 15, 1989 by prisoners' rights activists Alberto Aranda and Ana Lucia Gelabert will now enter its fourth week, as Aranda and Gelabert will be relieved on April 12, 1989 by activists Domingo Cantu, Enrique Bugarin and Alvaro Luna Hernandez. At least 15 other Texas Department of Corrections (TDC) prisoners have volunteered to continue the indefinite strike, two at a time, each team for two weeks, in the fashion of the West German RAF political prisoners who have been striking since early February. Cantu, Bugarin and Hernandez will be relieved on April 26. The strike now has spread to at least three other TDC units, from the Mountain View and Ellis I units where it originated. It is carried out by the Texas Chapter of Prisoners United for Revolutionary Education (PURE).

The strike originally began after a national call by the Resistance Conspiracy Defendants Alan Berkman, Marilyn Buck, Susan Rosenberg, Tim Blunk, Linda Evans and Susan Whitehorn, for a 24-hour strike on March 15, 1989 in solidarity with some 300 striking Azanian (southafri-~~kkk~~-an) prisoners at Durban, Port Elizabeth and Diepkloof prisons, and at least 50 political prisoners in West Germany. Not less than 600 prisoners nationwide responded

to that call. PURE decided to extend it indefinitely for their own demands, which include an end to "sensory deprivation" and other psychological and physical torture and other mistreatment suffered very especially by militant and political prisoners in TDC. Such mistreatment violates standing court orders by the federal court in Ruiz v. Lynaugh--a landmark Texas prison reform lawsuit which began in the early 1970's and is still being litigated; the prisoners' class won the lawsuit.

Among other provisions Ruiz prohibits any retaliation or mistreatment of prisoners due to their militancy or political beliefs. Yet statements by Gelabert and Aranda in March 1989 tell of numerous instances of gross personal mistreatment (including Gelabert's "disappearance" wrapped inside a blanket out of the Mt. View Unit and into a secluded cell in another unit). Aranda was recently framed up (in October 1988) to 40 more years in prison, instead of release as he was due, for allegedly throwing "commode water" on a guard; an accusation which, even if true, would only be a 3rd Class misdemeanor under Texas law, punishable only by fine;...Cantu, a death row prisoner, will be protesting in addition the particularly brutal conditions suffered by Texas death row prisoners. Alvaro L. Hernandez, like Aranda a Ruiz witness, is a long-time activist and the founder and current Chairman of Pure.

PURE, which has recently extended to other states besides Texas, is the synthesis of many years of struggle for democratic rights inside Texas prisons; part of which struggle was the Ruiz, Guajardo, Lamar and other federal court cases won by the prisoners. After many setbacks, due largely to vicious retaliation, the movement naturally evolved into a higher form of struggle, now on a political revolutionary base rather than a merely reformist struggle of prisoners filing lawsuits in federal and state courts to try to humanize what in the opinion of many was "the nation's most brutal prison system." The crux of the current protest is the de facto reversal of important Ruiz provisions by the TDC, which violations are becoming more frequent and blatant by the day, while court-appointed monitors look the other way. A path by which TDC would soon regain its previous dubious place of honor.

Letters of support and protest are urgently needed to:

1) TDC Director James A. Lynaugh, P.O.Box 99, Huntsville, TX 77340;

2) Governor Bill Clements (a republi-~~KKK~~-an), State Capitol, Austin, TX 78711; and/or Attorney General Jim Mattox (a demo-~~KKK~~-rat), P.O.Box 12548, Austin, TX 78711-2548;

3) If possible, to the striking prisoners; Domingo Cantu, #924, Ellis I Unit, Huntsville, TX 77343; Enrique Bugarin, #471735, Ellis I Unit, Huntsville TX 77343;

Alvaro L. Hernandez, #255735, Goree Unit, P.O.Box 38; Huntsville, TX 77344...

IN THE STRUGGLE--WE SHALL WIN!
(update by Ana Lucia Gelabert)

April 27, 1989

Report to comrades

Political detainees in South Africa/Azania and West Germany have been on hunger strike for months. In South Africa, detained anti-apartheid activists are demanding an end to preventive detention. In West Germany, political prisoners from the Red Army Faction (the RAF, an armed underground anti-imperialist organization) are demanding to be put together in one or two groups as an end to isolation torture; an end to censorship of mail and political literature; and the release of several prisoners whose health has suffered greatly from their isolated conditions.

On January 23, 1989 a hunger strike began among detainees in South Africa. ... At the beginning of this hunger strike, approximately 1,000 people were in political detention. Almost 500 have been released. As of this writing, more than 70 political detainees are on hunger strike and some have become seriously ill.

Liberation forces in South Africa are increasingly targetting the restrictions that are placed on detainees after their release. It appears that the South African government is beginning to negotiate the issue of preventive detention as the hunger strike and the suffering of the South African/Azania people receives worldwide attention. But, even as detainees are released, they are subjected to severe physical and political restrictions. Sandile Thurst, a 28-year-old African anti-apartheid activist, is a case in point. He began his hunger strike on February 18 with eighty other political detainees in the natal Province. Some of those 80 have been released, while some remain in detention and on hunger strike. Mr. Thurst was released on March 28, under these restrictions: a dusk-to-dawn curfew; banned from all educational institutions (Mr. Thurst is a researcher, so this makes it impossible for him to be employed in his field.); cannot be in the company of more than four people, except for family members; cannot leave his township; forbidden to participate in anti-apartheid activities. In addition, the South African government has cut off Mr. Thurst's medical benefits, so that he cannot receive free medical care. Similar restrictions have been placed on up to 200 activists. ...

Here in the U.S.A., over 600 political and social prisoners joined in a one-day fast on March 15 to show their solidarity with their sisters and brothers in the prisons of south Africa and West Germany. Hundreds fasted at the federal prison at Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, hundreds at the prison at Leavenworth, Kansas. Smaller groups participated in Trenton, New Jersey; Marianna, Florida; Pleasanton, California; Marion, Illinois; Hartford, Connecticut; Wash-

ington, D.C.; and various prisons in Texas. The solidarity fast was led by political prisoners in prisons throughout the United States. These fasts will continue on the 1st and 15th of every month until the hunger strikes are over.

Since the solidarity fast on March 15, 1989, in support of the South African and West German political prisoners, political prisoners throughout the U.S. have themselves initiated actions/protests within their respective confines to raise the class-consciousness of the prison masses to the reality of capitalist-imperialist oppression--which is designed to warehouse the surplus-labor pool, and/or all who rebel without a class-consciousness and end up behind these walls!

On March 15, 1989, comrade Ana Lucia Gelabert, of the Central Committee of Prisoners United for Revolutionary Education (P.U.R.E.) at the Mt. View (women's) unit in Texas, initiated an indefinite strike...

[The report preceded to give information on comrade Gelabert strike, including two letters from her. It then continued:]

As soon as I received a copy of Ana Lucia's letter to the National Campaign for Amnesty and Human Rights for Political Prisoners, I immediately incorporated myself in her indefinite hunger strike, and (like the RAF political prisoners) moved that a "chain" hunger strike be started and maintained here in Texas prisons. I would relieve comrade Ana Lucia on March 29, 1989, and myself carry the hunger strike on for two weeks. Because I live on a "Death Row" wing as a long-term segregated prisoner because of my legal and political activities--the first fellow captives I discussed this with also showed interest to do something about their class imprisonment. Soon, before I had completed my two weeks without eating, there were at least '18 death row prisoners' willing to carry the "chain" on. [The Report reproduced a letter from these hunger strikers. It then continued:]

...comrades, at the writing of this letter approximately 20-40 more death-sentenced prisoners; and, approximately 50-100 more general population prisoners here in Texas prisons have pledged to join the "chain" hunger strike either for two weeks, or on the 1st and 15th of every month--in protest of the arbitrary, brutal and inhumane conditions in these prisons--and how it is but a form of control and genocide of the rebels-without-a-cause before they can attain a class consciousness, and/or to control and suppress the surplus-labor pool in capitalist society to intimidate and coerce the whole of the working class with these "institutions of coercion of all kinds..." (Lenin)

The working class should be educated about the real class nature of capitalist society, how prisons are warehouses where the capitalist keeps the products of crime its economic policies have created; but, we (the imprisoned) only remain "capitalist products of crime" as long as we remain without a class-consciousness!...

...And, the class counterpart outside these walls must shed all illusions, prejudices and fears about who and what is a "class prisoner" first, and when that class prisoner

becomes a political prisoner.

...it will strengthen development, when the class counterpart on the other side of the walls understands the nature of such developments. Of course, the few prisoners able to comprehend the dangers in dealing with the "lumpen element" as Marx termed "the dangerous class, the social scum", realize they will be assassinated, murdered, betrayed, drowned in violence, overwhelmed, suppressed and repressed--however, the "potential" is here to be tapped and

further aligned with you on the outside.

In the spirit of comrade George Jackson, the Attica brothers, and all the politically conscious prisoners now fighting for the downfall to capitalism-imperialism, we move for solidarity beyond this class confines--to take the struggle further and militantly into the future!

VENCEREMOS,
COMRADE ALBERTO ARANDA ■

May Day speech: Capitalism and women's rights

Below are excerpts from one of the several speeches given at the MLP May Day meeting in Seattle on April 29:

Congress and the courts have been chipping away at abortion rights. Since 1973, the Supreme Court has issued 16 other abortion rulings. These rulings combined with individual state changes in law have severely restricted access to abortion for poor and working women. Federal funding was cut first by the Hyde Amendment in '77, then further restricted in '81 to exclude even cases of rape and incest. 37 states have also barred Medicaid funding, and in about 80% of counties in the US there is no place to obtain an abortion. In 1981 Congress passed another law prohibiting the use of federal health insurance for abortions by 3 million government workers except where the woman's life is in danger.

Reagan, upon assuming office in '81, encouraged and gave impetus to the anti-abortion movement. It is not a movement of the broad masses and therefore has had to employ the terrorist tactics of arson and bombing, and the so-called non-violent tactics of clinic blockades, at which women are harassed and barred from entering clinics. Most recently, some fanatics attempted to murder Norma Corvey, alias Jane Roe, blasting her house with gun fire. Meanwhile Bush's Justice Department in "friend of the court" briefs has advised the Supreme Court to overturn Roe vs. Wade and ban abortions. According to Bush, Roe vs. Wade is based on flawed assumptions. The flawed assumption he's referring to is that women have any rights at all.

For working class women a ban on abortions would mean increased oppression, further deterioration of their already dire conditions and a return to unsafe, expensive and illegal abortions. To draw support, the anti-abortionists hide their true motives and appeal for support with demagoguery, lies and the moral authority granted them by god. Their sole aim, they claim, is to "protect the life of

the unborn" from murderous women, and to bring back the Christian heritage of motherhood from those feminists, who destroyed it...

It's no surprise to anyone that the Catholic church, fundamentalist men and the Republicans would want to end legal abortion, but clearly support for illegalization goes beyond these forces. The bourgeoisie in general is behind this movement. Look at the biased press coverage. Randall is running neck and neck with the neo-nazis for the most ink. In last week's press the nazi symbol on page B1 of the *Post-Intelligencer* was only slightly bigger than the fetus pictured the previous weeks coverage of the anti-abortionists.

And where is the liberal opposition to the anti-abortionists? For years the Democrats in Congress have been quietly passing laws restricting women's rights on a broad range of issues, not just abortion. And now, while some of the liberal politicians may say they support abortions--equivocating their stand to not piss off their Christian constituency--they stand passively by content to acquiesce to the fanatics. ...

With the '80's came the capitalist offensive led by the Reagan government. Women workers are not immune from this offensive against the class. Women, blacks and national minorities are hardest hit. Part of this offensive includes the attacks on abortion rights.

In the '80's there have been bipartisan cuts in childcare, healthcare, cuts in education. Welfare is continuously being cutback and replaced with workfare, forcing women to take any job no matter what the pay. The Reagan administration pushed hard to eliminate the hiring quotas that first opened up opportunities for women in the '70's, doing all kinds of propaganda about "reverse discrimination" in the process.

Meanwhile the capitalists have reintroduced homework--isolating, mind-numbing work at low pay. Women with small children, who can't afford day care, are being forced

to take these jobs.

In the better paying industries women have been hit hard by wage cuts, two tier, plant closures and layoffs. Last hired first fired. And take Boeing aircraft. On the one hand there exists a democratic attitude among men workers toward women; even the older workers respect the struggle women have had to wage to earn a living. On the other hand Boeing follows a very systematic policy of discrimination and segregation in the work place. You can visually determine the wage scale of a shop by seeing the numbers of women and blacks in the area.

Conditions are bad for such shops, and Boeing could not get away with this with white men. They attack women because of their social position. Could they excuse carpal tunnel in men by saying they're prone to it because of their menstrual cycle? Could they stick men in unskilled positions and justify it with, "Oh, those white men just have no mechanical inclination"? Could they pay white men less and justify it with the old, "Oh, men only work for pin money"? Could they refuse to pay medical benefits to men who were poisoned by saying as one doctor did, "She's just depressed because she hasn't gotten laid lately"? Not hardly. This is the Neanderthal ideology the Boeing capitalists promote to justify discrimination against women. ...

Besides the straightfoward dollars and cents side of the question there is also the political ramifications resulting from women gaining democratic rights. Marxism says that one of the most important lessons the working class gains

in the fight for democratic rights is that capitalist class has to be overthrown. Winning the right to abortion did not lead to the emancipation of women--nor did any of the other economic gains women made lead to this. However these struggles are levers for profound changes in society.

Through the struggle and gains of the last quarter of a century women move toward seeing that it wasn't their husbands in particular or the opposite sex in general that was the root cause of their oppression. Women as they join the working class can learn that capitalism exploits men and women. The divisions between the sexes tend to brake down--paving the way for unity. This also has the capitalists worried. A major bulwark of capitalism rule is dividing up the class, pitting women against men and blacks against whites etc.

Emancipation of women is impossible under imperialism, be it US or Soviet. This will only come about through socialism. The emancipation of women requires complete formal equality before the law and equality in practice--that is the full participation of women in production and all political and economic aspects of society. Emancipation requires the liberation of women from domestic slavery through the socialization of housework and the responsibilities associated with the raising of children.

Socialism will only come about through revolution. And there is no revolution without the full participation of women in it. And organizing women and the revolution is what we're doing here tonight. ■

May Day speech: The question of the party and the struggle of trends

Below is the second speech delivered at the MLP May Day celebration in New York. It has been edited for publication.

Comrades and friends,

The preceding speaker has made a number of points from the perspective of two decades of struggles. I am going to take a few minutes to underline just one aspect of this, namely, the struggle for the idea that a Marxist-Leninist party was necessary.

The great mass struggles of two decades ago brought a section of activists to revolutionary conclusions. As that movement ebbed in the early 1970's it left behind as part of its legacy a number of activists who regarded themselves as Marxist-Leninist. These forces were banded together in a host of organizations ranging from hundreds of loose-knit local collectives which came into being one day and dissolved the next to a handful of organizations more or less national in scope.

From the beginning there were controversies among these forces. And as the mass movement receded the struggle among the Marxist-Leninists came more and more in focus. The movement of that day was a bewildering maze of organizational names, of pet slogans and touchstones. There were fights over particular turns of phrase. Confusion was the order of the day and the course of these debates was often bizarre and sometimes Byzantine. But from the vantage point of two decades of hindsight, it is clear that much more was at stake here than game-playing. Underlying those tortuous and often confused debates was the emergence and growth of different political trends that became more and more distinct as the years passed.

One of the key questions in this debate was the question of the party: whether the working class needed an organized, advanced detachment, and the relationship of that detachment to the mass movement and revolutionary struggle.

This afternoon I would like to recap the struggle on this question and draw some lessons from it.

Groups and Trends

I would like to begin by touching on what the movement of twenty years ago looked like.

The first thing is that, in the movement of that day, the pro-Soviet revisionist "Communist Party" often seemed as if it was nowhere to be seen. In the trade unions the Communist Party was busy worming its way into the lower ranks of the bureaucracy and on the whole stayed away from the wildcat movement. In the black liberation struggle

the CP had committed itself to support for the more conservative civil rights organizations and recoiled in horror as a revolutionary wing emerged in the movement. In the turbulent actions of the student movement the CP was nowhere to be found.

On one hand, the CP found itself marching in the wake of Johnson in 1964 and of Humphrey in 1968, and it was less than enthusiastic about a movement which rejected and opposed these politics. On the other hand, the CP had survived the repression of the 1950's by going "underground"--so deep underground that you couldn't find them with a shovel and a pick. So "underground" was the CP that most of its members participated in no organized political activities, including their own internal meetings.

What, then, was an activist's introduction to Marxism-Leninism? Well, there was PL. PL, the Progressive Labor Party, came out of the CP in the early 1960's. It was formed by elements in the CP who were discontented at the prospect of spending the rest of their lives hiding in their closets.

PL, at the outset, had no stable politics. It gravitated toward what was "happening": toward China and Albania in the public debates with Soviet revisionism; toward Cuba when Cuba was it; toward Black Power when Black Power was the rage. Gradually, PL began to shed some of these trappings and developed its own politics.

PL's name came about from the idea--held very early in its formation--of a mass labor party based on the trade unions. The idea of such a party was dropped, but in 1967 PL returned in essence to the same thinking with the publication of its trade union program. PL put forward "base building" in the labor movement as its foremost task. For them, this meant: the workers were not yet revolutionary-minded en masse, so neither would be PL. It would engage in pure and simple trade unionism in the workplaces and, if the students were really revolutionary-minded, they would drop their struggles and join with PL in this endeavor. This essentially rightist orientation was interwoven with the most extreme leftist phrase-mongering and dogmatism, and for a time was a palpable hit on the Ivy League campuses.

Most activists, of course, were unable to swallow this sophistry. For better or for worse, they came from the mass struggles, saw themselves as part of those struggles, carried with them the strengths and weaknesses of the movement, and were not easily appealed to by programs calling on them to turn their backs on the movement.

Many of these activists gravitated toward Marxism-Leninism, but they did so without signposts. They saw

themselves as revolutionary; they were loyal to the movement but felt something more was needed to push things forward. They gravitated toward Marxism-Leninism because it was supposed to be revolutionary and because it made sense—to the extent they understood it. On the whole, Marxism-Leninism was taken up in a groping and halting fashion, pushing forward by the urgent tempo of the day.

Many of the activists of that time organized themselves into collectives and communes, and these became the center of gravity of the revolutionary movement. They felt that something more than individual participation in the movement was needed, and many banded together into loose collectives as a first stab at organization. A collective was generally a circle in which activists who participated in the movement together would argue about what to do, lay grand plans, study an occasional article, and go about their business. Collectives tended to be formed along social lines as much as along political lines, and therefore also tended to go out of being about as frequently as they came into being. Nonetheless, this primeval form of organization was the only form that many had access to.

A commune was a collective that lived together, adding housekeeping, among other things, to the agenda. It was a mark of the tenor of the times that debates raged on whether it was a matter of principle for collectives to live together in communes, while the communes more often than not became subsumed in their internal social issues and collapsed therefrom.

The politics of the collectives were as confused and undeveloped as their organization. For years the mass movement had been developing by leaps and bounds. To many activists, it seemed that all that was needed was for the movement to continue to grow in size and militancy and that would be the revolution. The idea that something more than the spontaneous development of the movement was needed, that in particular there was a need for a party, a definite organization, national in scope, which had definite and well-defined politics, tended to be regarded with suspicion, if it was regarded at all. Above all, the politics of the collectives tended to be a hodgepodge of Marxism-Leninism with the prejudices of the movement.

After a time national organizations began to grow up and spread from city to city by winning over some collectives and splitting others. With one significant exception, these national organizations were a further development of the collectives. In fact, part of their appeal was that they gave more coherent expression to the prejudices of the collectives. An example of such an organization was the Revolutionary Union. The RU idealized the collectives and advocated their formation, even at a time when activists were turning to organizations like the RU, in part because of a feeling that the collectives were not enough. And RU made this easy by having a vague political stand. To join the RU, all that was necessary was to agree in principle with the dictatorship of the proletariat and the need (sooner or later) for armed struggle to bring this about, and to join a collective. This embraced everyone from the

supporters of the Panthers who thought the revolution would be a black revolution led by the Black Panther Party, to elements who embraced PL's trade union program but rejected its phrase-mongering. So successful was this approach that in the summer of 1970 RU claimed 1,200 members in California alone; and within two years had lost 80 to 90% of them; all without yet having established a national newspaper to show in practice what in fact it stood for.

In the course of several years the RU evolved from vague politics to a sort of generalized but economist Marxism-Leninism to a semi-anarchist Maoism, finally settling down into the semi-anarchist, semi-liberal Maoism of the RCP (Revolutionary Communist Party) today, at each stage shedding half or more of the previous membership through splits, confusion and disillusionment.

The American Communist Workers Movement (ML)

This was the state of the movement in which the American Communist Workers Movement (Marxist-Leninist) was born and initially developed into a national organization. It did not burst upon the scene in a brilliant halo of light. The ACWM(ML) was founded by a group of ordinary activists who disagreed with PL but saw the need for a party. They founded an organization, started up a newspaper to put forward their positions, and set forward to grope their way into the future, often in the most painful way possible. The ACWM(ML) was not correct on every detail; on the contrary, many things were said which we would cringe at today. If every conceivable mistake was not made, at least a goodly percentage of them were. Yet the ACWM(ML) soon found itself with branches in a modest number of cities from coast to coast, because its positions struck a responsive chord in a section of activists in collectives, in communes, and even in the RU. And we are here today to mark this anniversary because of what was essentially correct in these positions.

I would like to review some of these positions.

The party as the organized, advanced detachment of the working class

Twenty years ago the idea of a Marxist-Leninist party was a controversial one, even among those who considered themselves to be Marxist-Leninists. As far as PL was concerned, they were the party and that was all anyone needed to know. For others the question was a little more complicated. For many in the pre-party collectives, the idea of a party which was among but distinct from the mass movements, and did not live and die with the ups and downs of these movements, seemed somehow elitist. The idea of a party that was organized and therefore had a structure seemed inherently bureaucratic. And the idea of a party which had definite politics, which everyone in the party worked for, seemed frightening beyond words. Indeed, for years elements in the movement would revile

ACWM(ML) comrades as robots with no ideas of their own, or complained "You guys--you all sound the same."

Along these lines, the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* once complained that all our comrades ate borscht, slept on bare floors, and all the women looked like nuns.

Underlying these complaints was a fundamental misconception about the nature and workings of a Marxist-Leninist Party, a misconception the ACWM(ML) did not share.

In its founding statement, the ACWM(ML) talked of the need for a party. And the *Workers' Advocate* would cite Lenin's views from *What Is To Be Done?* The ACWM(ML) held that such a party must be composed from the political-conscious, the most advanced section of the working class.

The members of the party would not simply be individuals who had membership cards: a member of the party would belong to a particular organization of the party and work for the party through that basic organization. The basic organizations, in turn, would be the means through which the party maintained its ties with a much broader section of people around it. In the basic organizations, all members would be required to give their views and participate in making decisions; and, once these decisions were made, to carry them out in practice.

This was the party the ACWM(ML) set out to build, and it did so by, from the beginning, building up organizations of this type and not amorphous collectives.

Closely linked to this concept of the party was the idea of working as communists. Curiously enough, those who found the idea of a party "elitist" also thought it crazy, to carry out open communist work, such as frankly giving communist positions or--heaven forbid--having newspapers and leaflets bearing the party's name. They thought: when everyone else was for communism we could be too; until then we would have to play our cards close to our chest. Apparently, having a party was elitist but hiding one's views was just fine.

ACWM(ML), on the other hand, made a principle of such work, and set out from early on to build up a national newspaper to give its positions. This meant not only taking those positions to thousands upon thousands of workers; it meant we have the same politics in Seattle that we did in New York. And this made us, not robots, but rather politically alert--and stronger than the mere sum of local organizations.

Thus the ACWM(ML) put into practice what Lenin described as follows:

"The Marxists have a fundamentally different view of the relation of the unorganized (and unorganizable for a lengthy period, sometimes decades) masses to the party, to organization. It is to enable the mass of a **definite class** to learn to understand its own interests and its position, to learn to conduct its own policy, that there must be an organization of the advanced

elements of the class, immediately and at all costs, even though at first these elements constitute only a tiny fraction of the class. To do service to the masses and express **their** interests, having correctly conceived those interests, the advanced contingent, the organization, must carry on all its activity among the masses, drawing from the masses all the best forces without exception, at every step verifying carefully and objectively whether it is a live contact. In this way, and **only** in this way, does the advanced contingent train and enlighten the masses, expressing **their** interests, teaching them organization and directing **all** the activities of the masses along the path of conscious class politics." ("How Vera Zasulich Demolishes Liquidationism," *Collected Works*, Vol. 20, p. 409, Sept. 1913)

The party and the mass movement

For many activists of the day, the movement was the be-all and the end-all; the movement should simply grow until it became the revolution. And they shrank from the idea of taking up building a party and everything that would entail work distinct from the movement in general.

This prejudice was elevated to the theoretical level by the RU, which proclaimed that the main task was to build the "united front" and that the party would emerge in the course of building the "united front".

The mirror image of this was PL, which turned its back on the work of developing the militancy and direction of the movement and substituted "base building".

The ACWM(ML), to the contrary, grasped that there was a fundamental relationship between building the party and carrying out revolutionary work in the mass movements. And in 1969 and 1970 in Cleveland the ACWM(ML) could be found in every demonstration, distributing its literature, carrying its banners, and organizing militant-minded activists to take up revolutionary positions in the movement. In Cleveland in those days, when reformists would seek to keep demonstrations blocks away from vice-presidential big-mouth Agnew or whatever the object being denounced was, it was the ACWM(ML) which organized as many activists as possible to confront the reactionaries. This was part and parcel of ACWM(ML)'s attempt to build the party, but to build it in the thick of the mass struggle.

The party as a party of revolutionary action

It is all very well to recognize the "eventual necessity" of revolutionary action and to imagine glorious future deeds on the barricades. But what does one do today about police attacks on demonstrations? About arrests of leafleters? About the attempt to build fascist gangs like the

"hard-hat" movement of 1970? In the movement of twenty years ago, the fight against repression was frequently left in the hands of movement lawyers. According to some such worthies, resistance was pointless; they could always get you off in court. Declared one movement lawyer: there is no reason for anyone to spend a single night in jail. In other words, let the repression go unchallenged; you can always rely upon the courts to clear it up after the fact.

ACWM(ML)'s approach was a little bit different. It can be roughly summed up as follows:

- 1) put your money where your mouth is;
- 2) pick your fights to make them fights that count politically;
- 3) bring a section of the masses with you.

This was called the resistance movement, action with analysis, and mass democracy.

An excellent example of this was the smashing of the "hard-hat" movement in Cleveland in 1970. When the "hard-hats" announced a demonstration in support of Nixon and Agnew, the ACWM(ML) blanketed the town with leaflets denouncing the "hard hats" and calling for a counter-demonstration. For weeks, meetings of workers and activists in Cleveland were turned into a forum to denounce the "hard-hats".

On the appointed day the ACWM(ML) did indeed hold a counter-demonstration, which wound its way through working class neighborhoods before it ended up at the gathering point of the supposed "hard hats"--businessmen in shiny new steel helmets purchased at Sears the day before--and "cut through their ranks like a knife through butter".

A police attack followed, and many comrades spent the next months behind bars. But a real blow had been struck at the "hard hat" movement, a blow with political weight, which set back the "hard-hat" movement and won a section of activists over to the ACWM(ML). This was the mass democratic method, action with analysis, and the resistance movement in action.

Stand up for building the working class party!

Very early on, the *Workers' Advocate* carried articles about what it called the mass bureaucratic method. These articles were aimed specifically against the methods of the reformists in keeping a lid on the militancy of the anti-war movement, and against the use of such methods in the left more generally. They were followed by other articles aimed against the prejudices rampant among the pre-party collectives and the RU, although they did not say so by name. This was the beginning of a decade-long struggle against what the ACWM(ML) and its successors came to call neo-revisionism.

In the beginning the polemic was couched in phrases such as "the mass democratic method versus the mass bureaucratic method". From the perspective of two decades, we can see that yes, beneath these somewhat arcane phrases lay a real point. What began as shades of difference developed into the hard-drawn lines of opposing trends. The trend launched by the ACWM(ML) today survives as the Marxist-Leninist Party and revolutionary Marxism-Leninism; the trend of neo-revisionism gave us social-chauvinism, liquidationism, and the liquidationism-turned-inside-out in the semi-anarchist survivals of this and that group.

This struggle--the struggle for party concept--is by no means over. Twenty years ago it was against those who had a painless, instant substitute for building the party. Ten years ago it was against those who had begun to doubt everything in Marxism-Leninism from A to Z. Today, if nothing else, it continues against the very real and palpable pressures brought upon us by eight years of Reaganism. And tomorrow, as the movement arises again, it will be fought out in a new way under new conditions, but essentially on the same old questions. So long as the working class remains as a class, so will remain the issue of building the party of that class. ■

Correspondence: BT replies on Afghanistan

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30 March 1989

The Workers' Advocate Supplement
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Dear Comrades,

Your polemic against our position of military support to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan ("The Trotskyist 'BT' backs Soviet revisionist military action against 'the great majority of Afghanistan's population'; Trotskyism and the Brutal Trampling on Afghanistan by the Two Super-powers," *Workers' Advocate Supplement*, 15 February) is presumably intended to divert attention from your shameful neutrality in the current battle raging in Afghanistan between the imperialist-backed theocratic mujahadeen and the modernizing Soviet-backed Kabul regime. Your position is fundamentally anti-Marxist in that it replaces scientific socialism with abstract petty-bourgeois "democracy." It is rooted in your basic disorientation on the question of the class nature of the so-called "socialist" states.

You place a great deal of importance on the supposed right of the "Afghan people" to self-determination. A few words must be said on this. First of all, for Leninists, the right of self-determination applies to **nations** and there is no Afghan nation. Afghanistan is a country composed of distinct tribal peoples, who were amalgamated into the kingdom of Afghanistan as a result of a deal between the British Empire and Czarist Russia.

In *Marxism and the National Question*, written under Lenin's tutelage, Stalin defined a nation as "a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture." Apart from a common religion, the various peoples of Afghanistan share very little. This you can confirm by checking any competent source. For example, according to R. Gopalakrishnan in *The Geography and Politics of Afghanistan*: "Internally, heterogeneous Afghanistan has constantly faced problems of building up a viable state out of ethnically disparate peoples..." Using Marxist criteria it is impossible to consider Afghanistan a nation.

Far worse than your postulation of an Afghan nation, is your elevation of self-determination to an ultimate principle, and your derision of those who consider the abolition of female chattel slavery more important as

"social-imperialists." Here you find yourself a million miles away from Marxism-Leninism. For example, in 1848 Marx opposed self-determination for the Czechs, Croats and other "South Slavs" because he saw those nations as "outposts of Czarism," the main gendarme of reaction in Europe. In *The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up*, Lenin referred approvingly to this position and said: "The several demands of democracy, including self-determination, are not an absolute, but only a **small part** of the general-democratic (now: general-socialist) **world** movement. In individual concrete cases, the part may contradict the whole; if so, it must be rejected."

The Bolsheviks did not hesitate to introduce a new set of social relations in Soviet Central Asia (which was almost as backward as Afghanistan) despite the inevitable reactionary resistance of the indigenous elites. Furthermore, they were prepared to intervene militarily in Poland in order to aid the German left and save the Hungarian revolution (which had alienated the peasantry, the bulk of the Hungarian population).

Your capitulation to petty-bourgeois "democracy" is revealed most nakedly in your objection to our elementary statement that, "Marxists do not choose sides in social conflicts on the basis of the relative popularity of the opposing forces." Thoughtful comrades of the MLP should consider the implications of choosing sides based on popularity. Was Lenin wrong to oppose the first great imperialist war, which, after all, had the support of the majority of the Russian masses?

Marxists have found themselves in a small minority at many junctions in history, and necessarily so. Revolutionaries must sometimes support one side in a conflict even though it has alienated the masses. What is the MLP's position on the Nazi invasion of the Ukraine? The Kremlin rulers had thoroughly alienated the Ukrainian masses through denial of national rights and the horrors of Stalin's forced collectivization. As a result many Ukrainians initially hailed the Nazi invaders as liberators. But revolutionary Marxists were not neutral in this conflict. We could multiply examples endlessly.

Your rejection of elementary aspects of Marxist methodology is of a piece with your disregard for Afghan reality. For example in the 1 May 1988 edition of *Workers' Advocate*, you say, "the resistance to Soviet occupation became dominated by CIA-backed reactionary forces of tribal chieftains and Islamic fundamentalists." In fact the mujahadeen **jihād**, which began before the Soviet intervention, was a response to the introduction of bourgeois-democratic reforms (putting a ceiling on the bride price, educating women and initiating land redistribution) by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan government.

The "resistance," reactionary from the start, was backed

by U.S. imperialism, its Pakistani client state and Khomeini's feudalist theocracy. The Soviet army intervened in the first place only because it was clear that these forces were about to win and create another hostile state on their southern border. The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan posed the possibility of the introduction of social relations similar to those on the Soviet side of the border. This would have represented dramatic social progress for the peoples of Afghanistan, comparable to that achieved by the consolidation of the deformed workers state in Albania which you consider "socialist."

We do not endorse (or "hail") the manner in which the Kremlin conducted the war, nor the bureaucracy's decision not to pursue a social revolution and we condemn Gorbachev's pullout as a betrayal. We do not believe the Soviet bureaucracy has any historically progressive role to play—it is a parasitic caste resting atop the socialized property forms established by the revolution of 1917. We therefore call for its overthrow by the Soviet working class, just as we call for the political overthrow of equivalent castes in China, Cuba, Albania, etc. But in conflicts with domestic reactionaries or foreign capitalist powers revolutionaries militarily defend the deformed workers states. That is the significance of our distinction between "political" and "military" support.

It seems from your polemic that you reject this distinction. Yet in Nicaragua, you have supported the petty-bourgeois Sandinistas in their war with imperialism's mercenary contras, while simultaneously arguing that the FSLN's pro-capitalist policies are contrary to the interests of the Nicaraguan masses. As far as we know you do not call on the Nicaraguan workers to vote for the Sandinistas nor to join their organizations. In other words you give them no **political** support, while siding with them **militarily** against the contras.

You take us to tasks for believing "that the hideous crimes of Western imperialism against Afghanistan, and of

the reactionary forces inside Afghanistan [i.e., the mujahedeen--BT]" justifies support for "Russian imperialism." Instead you would support "the revolutionary forces that opposed both superpowers." The only problem is that these "forces" do not exist, as you are well aware. Your reference to them is perhaps intended to obscure the fact that you are **neutral** in the fight between the Najibullah regime and the reactionary imperialist-backed Islamic fanatics of the mujahedeen.

Your reactionary neutrality in the Afghan conflict derives from an equation of the Soviet Union with the western imperialists as "superpowers." Yet you are unable to determine exactly **when** the USSR became "capitalist"—only that it happened sometime between the Seventh Comintern Congress in 1935 and Stalin's death in 1953. What attitude do you take to the destruction of capitalism in Eastern Europe which was decreed from Moscow after the Red Army defeated the Nazis? This occurred, as you know, well after the Seventh Congress. In some cases, for example in Poland, it took place without the support of the majority of the population.

Members of the MLP who wonder why no one in the Maoist or ex-Maoist milieu can come up with a convincing explanation of what happened to the Russian Revolution must study the struggle of the Left Opposition, and in particular Trotsky's materialist analysis of the degeneration of the Soviet workers state contained in **The Revolution Betrayed**. Despite its sometimes leftist impulses, the MLP must remain fundamentally disoriented about the fate of the communist movement after Lenin until it seriously confronts the legacy and contributions of the Left Opposition.

With revolutionary greetings,

Gareth Mills,
for the Bolshevik Tendency

Comment on the letter from "Bolshevik Tendency": Trotskyist BT denies the right to self-determination of Afghanistan

The Trotskyists pose as the foremost critics of Soviet revisionism. Yet in practice they end up as little helpers of the Soviet revisionists. This has been demonstrated with striking clarity by their support of Russian imperialist occupation of Afghanistan. And precisely the more "left" sections of the Trotskyists, those that pride themselves on their loyalty to Trotsky and their mastery of "revolutionary

theory, have made a point of honor out of defending the indefensible, the rape of Afghanistan. They have singled out the Russian military as the hope for the Afghani people, with the Spartacists shouting "Hail to the Red Army in Afghanistan" and the "Bolshevik Tendency" (BT) calling for "Military victory to the Soviet Army."

For ten years, the two superpowers have been ravaging

Afghanistan with utter cruelty. The Russian military occupation was carried out brutally, as a bloody jackboot on the heads of the people. And the massive intervention by U.S. imperialism and its allies, their arming and financing and spurring on of the utterly reactionary groups, has been just as cynical and savage. No progressive person could support either of these two rapacious beasts fighting over the bodies of the Afghan people. We pointed out in the May 15, 1988 issue of the *Workers' Advocate* that the agreements between the U.S. and the Soviet Union were "a cynical deal that fuels more bloodshed." We pointed out that the departure of Soviet troops would "not mean that the misery of the Afghan people is over. At Geneva the imperialists of both Washington and Moscow ... made a deal to ensure that the Afghan tragedy continues to be a bloody one for some time to come." And this is what has happened.

We leave the discussion of the particular ins and outs of the current situation to other articles. Here we deal with the stand of the BT.

We had written in the Feb. 15 issue of the *Supplement* on the articles in winter 1988-89 issue (#5) of their journal *1917* on Afghanistan. We shamed them for supporting what they themselves regarded as a military intervention over "the great majority of Afghanistan's population."

Now we have received a letter from the BT in reply. It is printed in its entirety elsewhere in this issue of the *Supplement*. It seeks to defend their stand and show how it follows from Trotskyist principles. In doing so, it provides a further confirmation of the huge gulf that lays between Trotskyism and revolutionary Leninism. Trotskyism has picked up words and phrases from Leninism, odds and ends, but its spirit is utterly in contradiction to the revolutionary stand and essence of Leninism.

Just a collection of tribes?

Leninism, is the greatest opponent of imperialism. It has shown how to wage a consistent struggle that strikes at the root of imperialism. It provides guidance both to the struggle of the working masses in imperialist countries and for the liberation struggle of the oppressed nations.

But BT's Trotskyism has turned into an outright apology for imperialism. We pointed out in our article of Feb. 15 that BT's stand meant the denial of the right to self-determination of Afghanistan. And BT's letter confirms that, *cynically denying* that the Afghani people have any such right, and proudly displaying this imperialist stand as a proof of the theoretical sophistication of the BT.

BT argues that

"First of all, ...the right of self-determination applies to nations and there is no Afghan nation. Afghan is a country composed of distinct tribal peoples, who were amalgamated into the kingdom of Afghanistan as a result of a deal between the British Empire and Czarist Russia."

For BT, there is no Afghani people with any rights at all. They are allegedly just a collection of tribes. This is exactly how the apartheid rulers in South Africa justify the oppression of the black majority. They say that the black people are only a collection of tribes. As if the black majority had vegetated for decades. As if the brutal crimes against black people in South Africa were justified in those long ago days when those blacks were simply in tribal society.

Even if the Afghani people were just a collection of tribes, it still would be brutal imperialism to trample them as the two superpowers have done. When one reads Lenin's works to learn how to fight oppression, one gets one result. When one reads Lenin's works to find phrases to justify the Soviet revisionists, one ends up with BT's sophistry.

BT and the jackboot over "the great majority of the population"

Leninists look to the revolutionary movement of the oppressed as the force for change. They dedicate their lives and struggle to organizing the oppressed, bringing them class consciousness, and leading them into the revolutionary struggle. They hold that the emancipation of the working class comes from the action of the workers themselves. And Marxist-Leninist theory shows how the development of modern society leads to the class struggle and the rise of revolutionary forces.

But BT has a different view. In their articles on Afghanistan in *1917* they could see nothing but "outside intervention" as the force for progress in Afghanistan. They supported the military jackboot against what they describe as the violent opposition of "the great majority of Afghanistan's population." And BT's letter defends this shameful stand, describing our opposition to it as "capitulation to petty-bourgeois democracy..."

Let's look at the argument in their letter a bit more closely. We had shamed BT for its disregard of the "great majority" of the Afghani people. And BT replies,

"Your capitulation to petty-bourgeois 'democracy' is revealed most nakedly in your objection to our elementary statement that, 'Marxists do not choose sides in social conflicts on the basis of the relative popularity of the opposing forces.' Thoughtful comrades of the MLP should consider the implications of choosing sides based on popularity. Was Lenin wrong to oppose the first great imperialist war, which, after all, had the support of the majority of the Russian masses?"

"Marxists have found themselves in a small minority at many junctions in history, and necessarily so."

But what was at stake was whether the "great majority" of the Afghani people should be prodded with machine guns, terrorized with land mines, and suppressed by an

outside imperialist force. To defend such barbarity under the cover that it is necessary to take unpopular stands at times, is the height of cynicism. It is to confuse two very different things—organizing for a political stand, and ruling over the majority by force.

Naturally, our party does not determine its political opinions by popularity polls. We take our stand on the real class interests of the working masses no matter whether this stand is unpopular or not, and it certainly is unpopular among the reformists and trotskyists. But it is one thing to organize a political party, a political trend which takes stands the majority doesn't yet accept. It is another to rule over this majority by a military jackboot. It is one thing to advocate revolution no matter what the majority, which hasn't yet awakened yet, believes. It is another thing to impose a "revolution" (or worse yet, a revisionist-imperialist rule) upon them by fire and sword.

Leninism emphasizes the need for the communist party to win over the majority of the masses. It emphasizes that revolution is the act of the majority of the toilers, and it shows how the communists must work among the masses and win them over to revolutionary conclusions by leading them in struggle. The distinction between the party advocating the most scientific views, no matter how popular or unpopular, and the need to win the masses in order to carry out the revolution, would seem clear.

But this distinction, presumably a matter of the most elementary ABCs of communist work, is apparently regarded by BT as a prejudice of petty-bourgeois democracy. But by so doing, BT is showing that it has lost faith in the revolutionary capacity of the masses. It runs, instead, to the powers that be, whether the revisionist-imperialists in foreign affairs, or to hopes in the labor bureaucracy and reformists in domestic politics.

BT denies the internal forces in Afghanistan

BT, in fact, has no confidence in the class struggle and revolutionary movement coming to Afghanistan. It regards any mention of revolutionary forces in Afghanistan as "disregard for Afghan reality." This reality is supposed to be that Afghans are just a backward collection of tribes dependent on the foreign civilizing bayonet.

However, our Party uses the Marxist-Leninist method, not the Trotskyist one. Therefore we studied the actual evolution of class forces in Afghanistan, rather than relying on the Soviet revisionist bayonet to introduce progress. The article "Background notes on the situation in Afghanistan" briefly describes Afghani history. It does not paint some glorified picture, pointing out that "It is sometimes said that Afghanistan maintained a true independence in successful wars against invaders. But the truth is a bit more complicated." At the same time, it shows how Afghanistan has slowly been entering the modern world, and how the class forces are developing. By the 1960s left and even radical forces had emerged. The People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), which was formed in 1965 and which

gave rise to the present regime in Kabul, was a nationalist party, favoring various reforms, and oriented towards Soviet revisionism. There were more radical trends, including forces that opposed Soviet revisionism.

The class struggle and the struggle of political trends existed in Afghanistan, as elsewhere in the world. BT's denial of this is not a recognition of reality, but a sign of their refusal to support the development of an independent revolutionary stand.

Our article traced the evolution of the political situation. We also showed how and why the revisionist regime established by the PDPA proved a disastrous failure. We pointed to the narrow basis of the PDPA and its regime, and its tendency to rely right from the start on ruling over the masses by decree, military methods, and repression, rather than persuasion, education, and organization. One of its early deeds was to attack and arrest activists from the more radical currents in the left. It also used police methods in its own internal struggles. And its repressive features against the masses grew over time, with it finally ending up dependent on Soviet revisionist military and police support. The BT in its letter said that "The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan posed the possibility of the introduction of social relations similar to those on the Soviet side of the border." In a certain sense, this has indeed happened, and the methods of repression and revisionist rule that the Soviet revisionists have taught the PDPA have been one of the sources of the tragedy in Afghanistan and one of the bloody crimes of Soviet revisionism.

The BT holds that all opposition to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan was a matter of support for the CIA. We don't agree with this. There were radical trends opposed to the PDPA from the left, although they have presumably been swamped by the carnage of the war and repression from both sides. As well, the peasants have not only been massacred by the PDPA and the Russian military, but they have been trampled on by the pro-Western imperialist bands. Undoubtedly there are large masses of peasants who feel oppressed to a greater or less extent by both the regime and the marauding bands of mujahedeen. They may have no means to express themselves, and they may be a passive suffering mass. But the BT is wrong twice over when it assures one and all over and over that anyone in Afghanistan who hates revisionist brutality is a tool of the CIA.

The question of women's rights

The BT believes that the role of the outside bayonet in Afghanistan is justified by the issue of women's rights. In fact, however, the Soviet military occupation was a disaster for the masses that has thrown Afghanistan backward. Women and their rights, as well as everything else, has suffered from the massive carnage of the ravaging of Afghanistan. The liberation of women in Afghanistan has been an important part of, and dependent on, the develop-

ment of overall liberation movement in Afghanistan.

To defend the rights of Afghani women, it is more important than ever to support the development of an independent movement of the Afghani toilers. A movement which seeks to transform society based on the struggle of the masses of toilers, in the city and in the countryside.

Furthermore BT ignores the fact that the war is not being fought over the issue of women's rights, although the reactionary bands supported by the CIA would take their revenge against women. It is being fought over the domination of Afghanistan. That is why U.S. imperialism, which doesn't have "female chattel slavery" inside the U.S. although women are still oppressed, and which denounces Islamic fundamentalism in Iran, supports the most backward anti-women forces in Afghanistan such as the Islamic fundamentalists. And Soviet revisionism, when it occupied Afghanistan, cut down on the attempt to carry out reforms in Afghani society as one of its first orders of business.

We would also note, in passing, that BT's stand on Afghanistan is not the first time that brutal imperialism has been justified in the hypocritical name of defending women. British imperialism, for example, liked to justify its heavy hand over its empire by talking of its civilizing mission, such as the emancipation of women from backward customs. Leninism long ago provided the answer to this. It does not glorify the oppression of women, or any other feature of backward societies. On the contrary, it condemns such oppression, and shows how to organize the emancipation of women as part of the general liberation movement of the oppressed and backward peoples.

Subordinating the right to self-determination, to what?

Leninism regards the question of democracy as one of the important issues in mobilizing the masses for struggle and in preparing them for the socialist revolution. And with respect to the right to self-determination, it stressed its use in creating trust among the different sections of the toilers around the world and uniting them for the class struggle.

BT's letter, however, slights this question. It is not just that BT doesn't recognize that Afghanistan has the right to self-determination at all. But even if it, BT's letter implies that it isn't that significant. After all, it must be subordinated to other things, BT argues. And supposedly one can even carry out the "destruction of capitalism" although "without the support of the majority of the population." This amounts to a purely paper recognition of the right to self-determination, which is thrown aside at the slightest pretext.

Of course, it is true that the right to self-determination, like any other single part of the revolutionary program, is subordinate to the whole. But the issue is, what is it subordinate to?

BT gives the example of Marx's attitude to the national movement of the "South Slavs" in 1848. Here we don't want

to argue about the details of the situation in 1848, but to point to the general framework that Marx was following. Marx was dealing with 1848, which BT neglects to mention was a time of general European revolution. Marx believed that certain of the national movements of the Slavs (as opposed to the national movement of other Slavs as, say, the Poles) stood against this powerful revolutionary wave sweeping Europe, and that these movements stood as outposts of tsarism against the revolution. Here the point isn't whether Marx was right or wrong on his assessment of the role of certain national movements. The point is that his standpoint is that the interests of the overall revolutionary movement of the great mass of the population stands higher than the interests of separate parts of it.

BT's letter, however, when it quotes fragments from Lenin's discussion of Marx's stands, leaves out a trifle—and that trifle is the whole crux of the matter. That trifle is the revolutionary movement of 1848. Marx wasn't supporting one hangman regime over another, but was supporting a revolutionary upsurge, that was shaking Europe to the core, threatening the overthrow of major monarchies, and raising the prospect of liberation all over the European continent. And he wasn't worried about some minor embarrassments for the popular movement, but about tsarism suppressing this revolution in blood, and indeed it did send in troops to suppress the Hungarian revolution against Austrian oppression.

To apply this to Afghanistan, BT would have to show how the right to self-determination in Afghanistan poses a dire threat to the overall revolution. This might be difficult for them, since they don't recognize the existence of revolutionary forces in Afghanistan, and despair of the development of such forces. Indeed, the support by the world working class for the right to Afghani self-determination against the two superpowers could only help foster the development of radical forces in Afghanistan.

BT does say that another unfriendly regime on the borders of the Soviet Union would pose a problem to the Soviet revisionists. But the Soviet revisionists are bitter enemies of revolution. So subordinating the democratic rights of the Afghani people to possible slight discomfort of the Soviet revisionists is subordinating the right to self-determination to the counter-revolution, not the revolution. It looks more like defending superpower spheres of influence than anything else.

BT on its knees before Soviet revisionism

But this brings up the BT's stand towards the Soviet Union. While it boasts of its criticism of Soviet revisionism, and its alleged support for an overthrow of the ruling "caste", in fact it still holds that the Soviet Union is either essentially socialist or at least not capitalist. In the letter it talks of the "socialized property forms established by the revolution of 1917." This presumably is meant to imply that the Soviet Union is, if not socialist, at least "socialized." So what BT gives with one hand, it takes back with the other.

It poses as the real opponents of the revisionist system, and then says that the Soviet Union is still "socialized," still a "workers' state," or a "degenerated workers' state." They are for the "political overthrow" of the ruling bureaucracy, but they give it "military support." They say that they do "not believe the Soviet bureaucracy has any historically progressive role to play", but call for its military victory in Afghanistan in order to liberate women, and they apparently believe that it was a simple matter of decision whether "the Kremlin" would "pursue a social revolution" in Afghanistan. What kind of social revolution would that be? One without "any historically progressive role to play"?

All these BT distinctions are mere playing with words. The BT needs these dodges because it is unwilling to embark on the path of building the independent revolutionary movement of workers. So all its criticisms of the revisionists have to be cut short. They have to be verbal games for the consolation of the enslaved.

Theory to serve revolutionary practice

BT ridicules that we have not set an exact date, a precise year, on the degeneration of the Soviet Union into capitalism. But this is because BT still doesn't believe that capitalism has been restored there.

Well, let BT have fun with our careful analysis of revolutionary history, if they please. But we study history in order to find the general principles of revolutionary work, the general laws of the class struggle. This may not be as exciting to certain people as citing one disjointed

example after another from history, jumping from year to year and continent to continent with an ease proportional to the superficiality of the analysis. But we find that our study provides us with insight into the nature of socialism and into the tasks of the communist movement. We may or may not ever find an exact date for the degeneration of Soviet socialism into capitalism. After all, there are other examples that, when a revolution degenerates rather than being overthrown in a single counterrevolutionary blow, a process occurs in which setting a precise year may be somewhat arbitrary. But we are definitely participating in the struggle of the revolutionary Marxist-Leninists of the world to strengthen the anti-revisionist struggle.

The BT may perhaps understand our views on theory better if they ever succeed in emancipating themselves from bondage to "socialized" Soviet revisionism, and if they ever take up building an independent revolutionary movement, instead of cherishing hopes in the reformists, labor bureaucrats, and others. But then again, if the BT did that, they wouldn't be trotskysts any more. ■

Other articles on BT in the Workers Advocate Supplement:

- 20 May 1987: Trotskyism trails in wake of reformism
- 20 June 1987: Correction
- 20 Dec. 1987: Trotskyism defends reformism
- 25 Jan. 1988: Trotskyism defends reformism--Part 2
- 15 Feb. 1989: BT against Afghanistan ■

The ACWM(ML) and the resistance movement

Continued from the front page

more regret than we should feel over discarding rotten apples from a barrel."

The "silent majority"

Nixon and Agnew often spoke of the "Silent Majority." This was supposedly the great mass of good god-fearing patriots who supported everything the White House did. They talked of the ones you don't see because the movement makes so much noise. Of course, it would be more accurate to have called this the "Imaginary Majority." Nixon eventually proved to be the most unpopular president in U.S. history. However, Nixon and Agnew claimed there was a "Silent Majority." This supposed majority was fed up with radicals and would come out against the protesters. When Nixon and Agnew worked to build up a fascist mass movement, the hard hat movement, it was to be the physical manifestation of the so-called "silent majority."

The hard-hat movement

The first "hard-hat" action took place in New York City. They viciously attacked an anti-war demonstration. These so-called hard-hats were mostly police and businessmen dressed up in construction workers' helmets, or hard-hats. There were however a number of rank and file workers there. The construction capitalists threatened the loss of a day's wages if they didn't go. And the sold-out leaders of the construction unions backed this up, and themselves organized to get workers there. They hoped to suck the workers into a fight with the students and youth. A reactionary section of the construction workers did attack demonstrators. However, our comrades talked to construction workers later. Many of them said that they were brought there under false pretenses.

The liberals and various sections of the left wrung their hands and promoted an atmosphere of fear about these forces. They preached hysteria that "workers" were coming out against students.

The real sentiment of the masses

ACWM(ML) knew better. It had faith in the masses. It was in touch with workers in the factories and knew their hatred for Nixon and Agnew. It was in touch with the students and knew their fighting spirit. All through that spring of 1970 it had confronted the very same reactionaries who made up the hard hats. They tried to keep our

comrades from distributing in the working class communities of Cleveland. The comrades successfully mobilized the masses to confront these reactionaries and protect the distribution. The comrades knew that the workers despised these reactionaries and would support a fight. It did not kowtow to the "hard hats" or the fear-mongering of the opportunists.

No. It stood up to the Nixon-Agnew administration. It boldly called on the masses to fight back. The comrades organized a demonstration against Agnew in June 1970. And in July 1970 it organized to break up a hard hat demonstration.

Now comrades, at the time, Agnew was a well-promoted spokesman of the bourgeoisie. ACWM(ML)'s action helped to expose him as a fascist buffoon. He became increasingly discredited. In fact, he became such a target of the hatred of the masses that he became a burden to the bourgeoisie. He later had to resign from the Vice-presidency in disgrace. And the work of ACWM(ML) against the hard hats was very successful. They broke up the hard-hat march in Cleveland. They exposed the hard hats as not so powerful after all. Other activists took up confrontation of the hard hats. This smashed this attempt to build a reactionary mass movement.

So what are the lessons from the struggle against Agnew and the "hard-hats?"

Class analysis

First, the importance of class analysis.

Now ACWM(ML) was not just fighting in the dark. It followed what it called action with analysis. In the struggle twenty years ago against Agnew and the hard hats, ACWM(ML) had a class analysis of these forces. They recognized Agnew as a spokesman for the capitalists and the government, a spokesman for reaction against the masses. ACWM(ML) followed politics. They saw the connection between Nixon-Agnew and the "hard-hats." They knew that the hard hats were capitalists, cops and reactionaries.

ACWM(ML) carried out a widespread agitation against the Nixon-Agnew administration. It exposed the hard hats and their attacks on the progressive movement among the masses.

ACWM(ML) knew the sentiment of the workers against these reactionaries. And it properly judged the mood of the masses for a fight. It judged that this fight could advance the mass movement.

The MLP learns from these traditions. It sees the need for class analysis. It brings the class questions to workers.

It judges the mood of the masses and organizes the workers to fight reaction.

Oppose reformism in front of the masses

The second lesson is the necessity of exposing and fighting reformism before the masses.

Twenty years ago the ACWM(ML) saw the need to expose the opportunists. It carried out what it called mass democracy. That is, it stood for explaining among the masses what to do. It stood for exposing the sabotaging role of the opportunists right among the masses. This is absolutely necessary to organize the masses for action.

When Agnew was to visit Cleveland in June of 1970, the ACWM(ML) called for protests. Slogans against Agnew were spray painted on walls and bridge overpasses. Thousands of leaflets exposing Agnew as a mouthpiece of capitalist reaction and calling for a demonstration against him were printed and distributed. These leaflets were distributed to factory gates, in the working class communities and on the campuses. And as I mentioned before, "hard hat" reactionaries tried to stop the distribution in some of the communities. The comrades organized the working masses to oppose these reactionaries and defend the distribution. All this made the bourgeoisie and the opportunists quite upset. A representative of the Student Mobilization Committee expressed concern in the bourgeois press about the plans for this demonstration.

Now SMC was a major organization of the period. It organized some of the biggest marches on Washington. So this was a lot of pressure.

However, ACWM(ML) judged forces by their politics and not their numbers or influence or their press connections. The SMC had opportunist politics. The SMC was wrong.

So ACWM(ML) went ahead and did widescale work among the masses, explaining the need to fight Agnew. And it worked right among the activists to expose the opportunists who were hampering mass action. ACWM(ML) worked to influence the activists, including those under the influence of the opportunists.

The weekend of the demonstration the pacifists of the SMC and SWP (the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party) were holding a conference in Cleveland. ACWM(ML) went to this conference and urged the activists to participate in the action.

This put such pressure on the SMC pacifists that they eventually had to call a march against Agnew. However, they worked to keep it as non-militant and non-oppositional as possible. Fred Halstead, a major leader of the SWP, said that they "would not stand for confrontation." And the leaders of the SMC announced that marshals from the meatcutters' union would be on hand to stop such confrontation. ACWM(ML) went to this march. It mobilized a section of activists to break away and cross the street. The marshals of the pacifist march physically tried to keep the activists from crossing the street. However, they were not

successful. And that section of the demonstration confronted the police and then marched on the hotel where Agnew was speaking.

The bourgeoisie was upset. Security tightened. And some big-wigs of the Republican Party were unable to get in to hear Agnew. This action helped electrify the movement in Cleveland and elsewhere.

Revolutionary action

Another feature of ACWM(ML)'s practice was revolutionary action.

The ACWM(ML) believed in putting its revolutionary ideas into action. It taught the masses contempt for the state. It taught them to stand up to the reactionaries and the police. It tried to lead the masses to break from legalism and pacifism. It sought to break the masses out of the bounds of what was acceptable and respectable to the bourgeoisie.

We can see this in the action against Agnew. And we see its revolutionary deeds when the so-called "hard hats" announced a march in Cleveland for July, 1970. When the hard hats attacked the anti-war demonstration in New York, sections of the masses fought them. However, the main opportunist and pacifist leaders of the movement preached fear. They talked against the policies of the Nixon administration. They talked against reaction and repression. But they didn't want a fight. They didn't want anything that wasn't respectable in the eyes of the bourgeoisie.

As I said before ACWM(ML) analyzed the necessity and the possibility of fighting the "hard hats". This was important to protect and develop the progressive movements. When the "hard-hats" marched, the ACWM(ML) organized a counter demonstration and marched right into them. This punctured the arrogance of the hard hats and they ran in all directions. The police rushed in to protect them. In the fight that followed five policemen were injured. Several comrades were arrested. Large numbers of Black, white and Puerto Rican working people were there denouncing the police. When the hard hats finally regrouped and marched, the masses all along the route threw stuff at them. Some youth boldly went among them and grabbed their symbol of racism, the confederate flag.

The Cleveland anti-hard hat march was the first time that an organized fight was waged against the "hard hats." It exposed them as reactionaries, not workers. It exposed them as creatures of the Nixon administration, protected by the police. After this, they only managed to organize one or two other things. And at those they were also driven away by the masses. This attempt at a reactionary mass movement saw defeat.

This action was well-considered. The ACWM(ML) had analysis of what the hard hats represented. They did preparation among the masses. And this struggle was in line with the mass current. It was needed at the time.

When ACWM(ML) fought the hard hats the masses were also brought into the struggle.

Setbacks and errors

The MLP learns from the best of this experience and spirit of the ACWM(ML). This is not to say that the ACWM(ML) did not have its problems. For instance, in the resistance movement, there were some incidents where the struggles were not waged on the same correct basis as in the fight against the hard-hats. There were cases where resistance was carried out in a semi-anarchist way, in isolation from advancing the mass movement. Where the fights with the police and reactionaries were not well-considered. Where the comrades took unnecessary losses.

For instance, some comrades were arrested for denouncing a judge as a fascist during a hearing over a traffic ticket. The ticket was not connected with the comrades' political activity. And the fight did not serve to advance the struggle of the masses. Nevertheless, comrades were jailed for this. And there are other such bad examples.

Now this type of error arose at that time not only from the youthful energy of inexperienced comrades -- who could get carried away in the excitement to lay waste to the capitalists and their police and courts. No, this was not the only source of the problems. This type of mistake also arose because there were theoretical weaknesses which led to inconsistency in some of the work. The youthful ACWM(ML) embraced revolutionary Leninism with enthusiasm, but its knowledge of and experience with Leninism was limited. And so theoretical errors crept in.

For example, the ACWM(ML) thought that Mao Zedong Thought was the continuation of Marxism-Leninism, and was the banner of anti-revisionist struggle, and so it upheld this with its characteristic fervor. In fact, it interpreted Maoism in the light of its understanding of Marxism-Leninism, but still this error had its effects. The Chinese revisionists used the language of Leninism to combine a whole eclectic brew of social-democratic reformism and liberalism with anarchist theories. And some of these harmful theories affected the ACWM(ML).

Now comrades, I should point out that the Maoism that affected the ACWM(ML) did not come directly from the Chinese. For one thing, the Chinese revisionists scorned the ACWM(ML) and refused to talk to it precisely because of its opposition to neo-revisionism. But the ACWM(ML) was particularly influenced by one wing of the Canadian Maoists, namely, by the Communist Party of Canada (ML).

Now the CPC(ML) talked a lot about building the Party and about the necessity for revolutionary theory, a revolutionary theory that was to be inseparably connected to practice. They talked about revolutionary agitation, and they waged a number of fights against the bourgeoisie. And they denounced revisionism and neo-revisionism. The ACWM(ML) was impressed by all this. But underneath, the CPC(ML) embraced Maoist policy -- combining all sorts of reformist practices and petty-bourgeois nationalism with

semi-anarchist phrasemongering.

At the beginning of the 1970's, CPC(ML)'s line on the working class movement emphasized the semi-anarchist tendency. And this affected the ACWM(ML) too. In fact, the CPC(ML) helped to form an anarchist faction inside the ACWM(ML) which nearly destroyed it. In the spring of 1971 this struggle came to a head. The ACWM(ML) defended itself and some of the anarchists split away. But the theoretical roots of the problem were not cleared out, and a new anarchist faction formed inside the ACWM(ML) with the assistance of the CPC(ML).

But even when it espoused some of the gibberish of the CPC(ML), the ACWM(ML) stayed close to the masses, continued to take part in the major reformist-led demonstrations and to fight for a militant stand in the reformist conferences. But the anarchist faction that was formed sneered at the mass movement. It had anarchist sneers against the "day-to-day struggle", against the fights for partial demands, against "leading strikes", against "sinking deep roots" among the masses. It even ridiculed forming "militant contingents" in reformist-led demonstrations.

Of course, the anarchist faction could not stay apart from all such work, or it would not have survived in the ACWM(ML). But it distorted this work and set forward confused and disorienting theories that disrupted consistent work and that combined anarchist standing aside from some things with rightist stands towards some other mass phenomena. In opposition to the straightforward Leninist conception of taking part in the mass movements, and finding the ways to fight the reformist domination and lead the movements forward, the anarchist faction might advocate that it was simply the fight for the right to organize or to disseminate revolutionary theory that should be supported. And instead of analyzing the actual political and economic issues that were being fought over, struggles had to be twisted to fit this scheme. Or it put forward as the general method the organization of what it called "leading [i.e. exemplary] struggles" to inspire the masses.

It distorted the summation of the fight against the reactionary hard-hat movement, essentially calling it a struggle for political power by a small band. In fact the battle against the hard hats was a struggle launched by the Marxist-Leninists to organize the masses to smash a fascist mass movement. It was a struggle based on a careful class analysis, based on a careful assessment of the fighting mood of the masses, based on mobilizing a definite section of the masses to support and participate. It was a struggle in the course of which the Marxist-Leninists did clear cut propaganda for proletarian revolution and also did inspire the masses with their fighting spirit, but it was not a fight for political power. Instead of seeing this, the anarchist faction promoted it as a detached fight having nothing to do with the mass movement or the mood of the masses, but rather more like some inspirational action by a handful.

This anarchist faction did great damage to the ACWM(ML), and to the Central Organization of U.S. Marxist-Leninists that followed the ACWM(ML). And the

Maoist theories that the anarchist faction got from the CPC(ML) are one of the sources for some of deviations in the resistance movement. In 1974, there was a sharp fight in the COUSML against the anarchist faction. Many of its theories were repudiated. A major and deep-going rectification was carried out on matters of ideology, of practical organizing, and of organizational methods. From this struggle, the COUSML marched forward.

There would be other struggles. A reformist faction, which turned out also to be fostered by the leadership of CPC(ML), was fought the next year. After that, a major deepening of theoretical clarity took place while fighting against the social-chauvinism and "three worldism" of the neo-revisionist forces. It led to the repudiation of Maoism and laid a firm foundation for the further theoretical work of the Marxist-Leninist Party.

This experience and the movement today

Today, the question of building a resistance movement lies before the progressive masses.

Today, as in 1970, the capitalists are intent on building reactionary movements to attack the masses. The Grand Wizard of the KKK David Duke gets elected. The murderous skinheads organize. And why? The bourgeoisie wants to smash up the gains of the anti-racist struggles of the 1960's. And they want to organize the youth for reaction, racism and militarism.

And let us look at the anti-abortion fanatics.

Women won the right to decide whether to have an abortion through the mass struggles of the 1960's and early 70's. Whether one is personally for or against abortions, one must support women's right to choose. However, the holy crusaders of the anti-abortion movement get official sponsorship. Why? The bourgeoisie wants to turn back the clock on this hard-won democratic right. And they want to build a reactionary movement to support the capitalist offensive of impoverishment, racism and militarism.

The newspapers, television, the politicians, and religious leaders are all supporting the anti-abortion movement. They give it extensive press coverage and many of these reactionaries even claim that it shows the true will of the masses. Reagan, don't vomit, compared it to the civil rights movement. They promote it as a powerful movement. Supposedly no one can stand up to it. And this is not unlike what the bourgeoisie was saying about the hard-hat movement in 1970.

The fight for women's rights demands that we fight these forces. Building a progressive movement demands opposing these reactionaries. And in organizing this fight there are many things to learn from the experience of the ACWM(ML).

The masses are the bulwark against reaction

The ACWM(ML) taught us something: have faith in the working class! Go among the masses, rely on them and

organize them. ACWM(ML) showed the need for class analysis; it showed the need to bring the class issues before the masses. It showed the need to judge the mood of the masses and to organize to advance the mass movement.

The MLP has analyzed the reactionary nature of the anti-abortion movement and its aim to organize against the rights of women. We see that it is a movement for all-round reaction. In the pages of the **Workers' Advocate** and in local leaflets the MLP carries out a wide agitation on these issues. We know the workers in the factories and their hatred of these reactionaries. We have met the students on the campuses and know their anger. We organize for the masses to confront these reactionaries. And we know that we can draw more and more of the masses into this fight. Rather than repel the workers, this will only repel the bourgeoisie and its admirers.

However, there are those who oppose confronting the reactionaries. There are those who don't want to do anything not acceptable to the bourgeoisie.

The bourgeois feminists of NOW and others are on their knees before the anti-abortionists. They tail the bourgeois propaganda that this is a movement of the masses, that it is a backlash from the liberal excesses of the 60's. Just as it was in 1970 -- this is fear-mongering to hold back the masses.

All across the country, the NOW higher ups have done their best to prevent confrontation. They don't want masses of angry people going after the holy hypocrites of Operation Rescue. Michigan NOW went so far as to issue a statement denouncing pro-choice activists for confronting Operation Rescue at the clinics. It called this "deplorable." It said that the activists who fought Operation Rescue "do not represent the pro-choice movement."

Oppose reformism!

The ACWM(ML) taught us the importance of exposing and fighting reformism before the masses. Today too the MLP sees that, to build the resistance movement, we have to oppose the opportunists. We have to go among the masses and explain what to do. We have to expose the sabotaging role of the opportunists right among the masses.

The MLP works hard to explain among the masses the necessity of fighting the reactionaries. It too organizes mass debates against the opportunists. It works to advance the resistance movement.

For example, we all know that Operation Rescue has been trying to shut down abortion clinics around the country. The MLP agitates among the masses about the reactionary nature of this group. It explains the necessity to fight its attempts to shut down the clinics. It has participated in several confrontations at the clinics from Boston to Detroit, Chicago, Oakland and Los Angeles. In these and other places the activists have confronted this activity with militant struggle. They block Operation Rescue people from getting to the doors or pull them from the doors.

And this militant resistance takes place in opposition to the activities of the bourgeois leaders of NOW. Take the events at one clinic in Boston this winter when Operation Rescue attempted to shut it down. The MLP and other pro-choice activists went right up to confront Operation Rescue. NOW leaders tried to stop this. Our comrades challenged NOW on why they were doing this. They organized a debate among the activists against this policy of NOW. They started the slogan "Let us move them." It was very popular and sent panic in both the Operation Rescue and NOW circles. NOW consulted with the police, and it formed a human chain in front of Operation Rescue to protect it from the activists. NOW demanded that activists leave the front line of confrontation. It eventually set up a sound system about 100 feet away and began a speak out. They were able to draw people away from the confrontation temporarily. However, more and more of the activists went back to confront Operation Rescue and most of the anti-abortion fanatics eventually left.

The MLP has had similar debates with NOW forces right in the midst of demonstrations and at conferences. This work is important for encouraging the activists to break from the constraints put upon them by these forces.

I want to make it clear that these two stands have a class basis.

The MLP stands for the interests of the working class and poor. It recognizes that the anti-abortion movement is not some spontaneous reaction of the masses. It is directly sponsored by the capitalists and their government. The MLP recognizes that defending the interests of the working class and poor women requires a fight.

NOW, on the other hand, represents the interests of bourgeois women. That is why it opposes militant tactics and wants everything to be oh so legal and peaceful. They frequently show their class stand. For example, Michigan NOW leaders say they oppose cutting the funding for abortions for poor women. However, it is not on the grounds of defending democratic rights or defending the poor. Rather they appeal to bourgeois prejudice against spending money on the poor. They claim that abortions will save money spent to raise children on welfare.

The NOW leaders are trying to keep the movement tame. They want it confined to women of the upper strata and out of the hands of the rebellious working masses. We must expose their sabotaging. We must take the leadership of the movement from their hands.

Words and deeds

The ACWM(ML) threw itself into revolutionary action; it put its words into deeds.

The MLP takes this to heart.

The MLP knows that we have to organize to confront the holy anti-abortion crusaders. And we are willing to break from and oppose forces like NOW who want to stop and cool down such confrontation. To do this requires putting one's words into deeds. Many comrades have experience at the pro-choice actions -- experience not only with NOW but with the more left-sounding opportunists. These opportunists will say that Operation Rescue has to be confronted, and some may even say a few words against NOW. However, when push does come to shove, they are unwilling to really break with NOW and have militant tactics against Operation Rescue.

Today, just as in 1970, being for revolutionary action means organizing the masses to break from legalism and pacifism. It means organizing the movement to break out of the bounds of what is acceptable and respectable to the bourgeoisie.

I have given examples from the struggle in Boston. In San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, Detroit and other cities comrades also face these issues. Of course, this struggle is in its early stages. There are many political and tactical questions to assess and sum up. Our tactics are based on building a revolutionary movement to defeat the reactionaries. Our tactics are based on organizing a revolutionary movement to get rid of capitalism altogether and building socialism.

Comrades,

Twenty years ago a small group of revolutionaries took up the task of building the Marxist-Leninist party of the proletariat. It strove to lead the class struggle. There is much rich experience to learn from in the history of this organization.

As I said comrades around the country are facing the issue of building the resistance movement against the reactionaries. We are coming right up against the anti-abortion fanatics. We are confronting the KKK and skinhead racists. Tonight I have elaborated some of the experience of the ACWM(ML) on building the resistance movement. I hope that this discussion will assist the comrades in building the resistance movement today. ■