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Operation desert massacre

Based on an article from Boston Worker, voice of the MLP-Boston:

George Bush has won his war with Iraq. The Pentagon is ecstatic. Raytheon and other merchant military contractors are licking their chops at the prospect of new orders for their high-tech weapons. Other American corporations are lining up to grab multi-billion dollar contracts rebuilding Kuwait's infrastructure. Washington and Wall Street are gloating that their military gamble has paid off. The American capitalist establishment has played its military trump card to extract tribute from the whole world. With fire and sword, it has staked its position as the dominant imperialist power in the oil-rich Persian Gulf, and as the leader of other wolves including oil-poor powers like Germany and Japan. It was a rich man's war.

Bush shows the world what brutality is

Bush sold his war as a war to stop Saddam Hussein the brute. Indeed Saddam was a brute, though that did not bother Bush and Reagan—or the kings of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia—so long as he was doing their dirty work slaughtering Iranians. But for all his brutality against the Iranian, Iraqi, Kurdish and Kuwaiti people, Saddam Hussein more than met his match in Bush.

The Pentagon presented the war as a Nintendo game. But at the other end people were being slaughtered. From the safety of 50,000 feet in the air, large sections of Baghdad, Basra and other Iraqi cities were reduced to rubble. Most Iraqi cities have had their electric power and water facilities destroyed, leading to mass suffering from cold and from water-borne diseases. While Bush raised the bogey of Iraq's chemical weapons which were never used, the US made massive use of chemical weapons. Hundreds of gas-air bombs were dropped on Iraqi positions "to shape the battlefield". These bombs suck the oxygen out of the air and can asphyxiate anyone within a mile.

Another of Bush's biggest crimes was the slaughter of fleeing Iraqi troops after Saddam had ordered them out of Kuwait. These soldiers were mostly draftees who did not want to fight for the Iraqi regime and never wanted to go to Kuwait in the first place. But that didn't matter to Bush and Schwartzkopf. While the Iraqi soldiers were fleeing out

Kuwait they were carpet bombed by B-52's and massacred by Apache helicopters. Today tens of thousands of Iraqi soldiers are dead.

Bush bombed the cities and infrastructure of Iraq, and he deliberately continued slaughtering Iraqi soldiers even after he had won the war, to make an example of Iraq. He wanted to send a message that anyone who crosses the US empire will be crushed. This arrogant, brutal display of power makes Bush and the imperialists proud. But large sections of the American people, even many who were drummed into supporting the war, are disgusted.

Some liberation of Kuwait

Bush's professed reason for the war was to "liberate"
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Detroit APWU union head vs. the injured workers' group

From the Feb. 26 issue of Detroit Workers' Voice, paper of the MLP-Detroit. The front page articles were "NO to the sellout mailhandlers' contract" and "Injured workers get insults instead of aid from APWU [American Postal Workers Union]"

Roger Holbrook's leaflet on "Light Duty" An underhanded attack on the injured workers' movement

In early February, APWU Detroit president Roger Holbrook issued a leaflet entitled *Light Duty*, which was distributed to some areas of the GMF [General Mail Facility] and BMC [Bulk Mail Center].

For months injured and light duty workers have faced the threat of layoffs and forced retirement at half-pay. Some workers have already lost their jobs. Workers concerned about this problem have tried to get the APWU

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to oppose management's attacks, but the union leaders have done little or nothing. Rank-and-file workers formed the organization **Injured and Handicapped Postal Workers United (IHPWU)** to fight for the injured's rights.

So with this statement by Roger Holbrook, did the APWU leadership finally get around to supporting the struggle of the injured and light duty workers?

Far from it. Holbrook's statement claims to be about light duty workers, but it is in fact an underhanded attack on the injured workers who've been getting organized. This is done in the form of a diatribe against *Detroit Workers' Voice*.

IHPWU has organized several pickets in the last two months, rallying rank-and-file support for the injured workers' cause and attracting some media coverage. Holbrook never mentions IHPWU, but it is this movement which is what he is really upset about.

Did Roger support the formation of IHPWU? Did he support its pickets? Did he think they were doing a good thing by publicizing the injured workers' rights? No.

Roger in fact opposed the injured workers picketing. Now he denies that. But many people know the truth. *Detroit Workers' Voice* stands by everything we said in the paper he's complaining about. In a hastily-called meeting with some injured workers—just two days before the first IHPWU picket—Holbrook, Pat Chornoby, and the union lawyer tried to intimidate injured workers from taking part in the picket.

But the biggest proof of who's right and wrong is this: If Roger's so much for pickets, why did the union leadership do nothing to support the IHPWU's pickets? Holbrook has the time to issue public statements attacking *Workers' Voice*, but where are his statements in support of the injured workers' struggle? And where were Holbrook or other union officials on the day of the pickets? While many rank-and-file workers joined in, union officials simply walked by without stopping for a second.

And in fact Roger's still trying to intimidate the injured workers. What else can you call his leaflet on *Light Duty*? Now he says, pickets are fine, but be careful whose agenda you're following. He suggests: by joining IHPWU you're following some "hidden agenda."

Roger uses the trick of creating unthinking hysteria about the Marxist-Leninists who put out *Workers' Voice*. It is no secret to anyone that we have supported and take part in building the IHPWU. But IHPWU isn't a Marxist-Leninist group. It is a mass organization uniting those with many different views—who united based on agreeing to fight for the injured. Communists and non-Communists have united on the basis of common struggle.

But Roger Holbrook tries to split the workers away from

the Marxist-Leninists. Holbrook's advice to the light duty workers is: "Be careful of whose agenda you are following," Holbrook thinks that activist injured workers are dupes of *Workers' Voice*, and he warns them to stay away from us. This is an insult to the workers.

Unlike Roger, we hold that workers can think for themselves. And we are open about where we stand.

But why is Roger really upset about the "communists"? Because *Workers' Voice* and the workers who take part in its network among postal workers have been very active in defending the rights of the injured workers. It has consistently spoken the truth and publicized the injured workers' cause. And wherever it has been necessary, we have helped expose where the union leaders stand.

Holbrook has no energy, no time, when it comes to defending the injured workers. What's important for Holbrook is to attack the activists of *Detroit Workers Voice* and create hysteria against them so that other workers will be intimidated away.

And what about this talk of the Marxist-Leninists having a "hidden agenda"? This is a lie. We disdain to conceal any of our views. We participate in the struggle of the injured workers openly. We have said from the beginning that we support the injured workers' struggle because we support all workers' struggles against injustice and exploitation. And we think the path of mass struggle and rank-and-file organization is the best way for workers to fight. We openly give our views on the struggle and about various tactics, and it is the IHPWU meetings which decide by democratic discussion what it will do. We also have views on other questions and we don't hide them either. This includes the fight against racism, war, etc. and the question of how to end the exploitation of the working class—which is our long-term goal.

Neither does *Workers' Voice* impose its views on anyone, nor do we hide them. Workers should judge us by what we say and what we do. Not by scary stories spread by union hacks who sell the workers short. □

Mailhandler union leaders set pattern of betrayal Postal workers: defeat the paycut contract!

The following article was contributed by "a group of Bay Area postal workers" to the Feb. 25 issue of Bay Area Workers' Voice, paper of the MLP-San Francisco Bay Area.

Note that the union and the USPS had submitted one particular issue to arbitration. Since this leaflet was written, the head arbitrator had announced that the arbitration decision covered the entire contract, not just the particular point it was supposedly called upon to decide. This would mean that the contract would be imposed on the workers, no matter what the vote. A number of the biggest Mailhandlers Union locals, but not the national union officials, are challenging this in court.

The Mailhandlers Union (MHU) has reached a tentative agreement with the USPS [United States Postal Service] management for a new three-year contract. The membership will soon be asked to vote on the proposal. A deceitful letter from union headquarters sent to the rank and file gave only the barest outline of this new deal. But it is clear that the MHU has once again broken ranks with the majority of postal workers in the other unions—this time to embrace a vicious pay-cut contract. This agreement marks an all-time low in postal collective bargaining. It is an attack on all the crafts and should be opposed!

The key provision of the new agreement is no contractual pay raise. With the current Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) formula that compensates for only about 60% of inflation, this contract will mean a pay-cut for Mailhandlers. For example, if inflation stays at the current 6.5% level (though it is likely to continue to rise), this would mean a 2.6% loss of real pay each year, or 7.8% over a 3-year deal. That means, when you step onto the floor in January 1994, you'll be making \$2340 less in today's dollars. If inflation goes to 10%, we would take a full 12% pay-cut in real dollars over 3 years.

The agreement also calls for the creation of a third tier of lower-paid workers. Just 6 years after the introduction of second tier, the USPS wants to further divide the employees and reduce the pay of the mailhandler workforce as a whole.

Bonuses to fool the unwary

To achieve his goal of a no pay raise/real pay-cut contract, Postmaster General [PMG] Anthony Frank and the Mail Handlers Union leaders are waving cash in the postal workers' faces. They are offering bonuses of \$900, \$900 and \$600 in years 1, 2 and 3, respectively. A look at the numbers reveals why Frank is so eager to part with this cash. Comparing the proposed bonuses even to a tiny 1% raise each year (about \$300) shows what a windfall bonuses

A pay-cut contract

would mean for the USPS.

Comparing Frank's bonuses to a 1% per year raise

	91	92	93	Total extra \$	94	Total extra \$ by:	4th year	5th	15th
Start at:	\$30,000	30,000	30,000		30,000				
Extra cash: (from bonuses)	900	900	600	2400	0		2400	2400	2400
Start at:	\$30,300	30,600	30,900		30,900				
Extra cash: (from 1% raise, gives \$300)	300	600	900	1800	900		2700	3600	<u>12,600</u>

With a raise, the amount your salary is increased by the end of the contract (\$900 in the case of a 1% per year raise) would be earned again and again, each year, until we retire since it becomes part of your base pay. But the bonuses are a one-shot deal. The difference, over 15 years (the average years to a postal worker's retirement) would be over \$10,000 for every employee. And these figures are true regardless of future contracts- raises, bonuses or whatever.

No protection against job elimination

To sell their rotten pay package, the MHU has been promoting the agreement as offering job security. But this is misleading. It is true, apparently, that the agreement keeps a no lay-off clause for mailhandlers. But it offers nothing to slow down Frank's plan to eliminate 10,000 to 15,000 mailhandler positions by 1995. The USPS is axing these jobs right now through retirements and firings as fast as operational requirements will allow. They have no need for outright lay-offs of mailhandlers now at this time. However, the no lay-off clause is only good for 3 years and can be done away with then if management succeeds in continuing the contracting out and other piece-meal privatizations. This is where we need protection and on these key points the MHU's new agreement remains silent.

More scabbing by the mailhandler union leaders

The promotion of this latest agreement marks the continuation of outright betrayal by the MHU leaders. In 1987, during the peak of contract negotiations, the union signed the infamous "me too" agreement. They broke ranks with the other unions and settled—a fact used extensively by the USPS in its public relations campaign against the other crafts. For this scab service they received the promise that any monies won by the clerks and carriers in their hold-out would be given to the mailhandlers as well. (But it didn't stop the mailhandlers from losing penalty overtime pay.)

Now, once again they are asking the mailhandlers to break solidarity with the other crafts and take a rotten deal the other unions have rejected. Again a "me too" clause is included, this time only for non-money issues decided

before arbitration. Already, Frank is using the MHU agreement to pressure all postal workers to accept the no pay-raise/real pay-cut deal. But we should not allow the treachery of the Mailhandler Union leaders to continue.

Vote no! Demand a fair pay raise

Though PMG Frank cries poverty, nothing could be further from the truth. Management is in the middle of an unprecedented program of automation costing some \$2.4 billion. Congress, seeking to pay for the deficit and the Savings and Loan grand larceny, hit the USPS coffers for \$4.7 billion over 5 years, wiping out a profit of \$1.3 billion in fiscal year 1990. The postal inspectors have uncovered hundreds of millions of dollars in waste, mismanagement, misused capital and fraud. Meanwhile, worker productivity has soared. In 1990, "total factor productivity" (which understates worker productivity) was up 3.4%, more than twice the goal of the USPS and 10 times the yearly average. In the first quarter of fiscal year 1991, it rose 1.4% alone! And on top of this, postal rates have just been increased by 16%.

Clearly, we postal workers have done our part and deserve a decent raise. But USPS managers and Congress want more—they want us to pay for the job-eliminating automation and the budget deficit to boot!

However, this contract is being met with widespread disgust on the workroom floor all across the country. So loud is the clamor that many Local Presidents, including those in Philadelphia, New York and New England, have been forced to denounce it and urge a "no" vote.

Let's not cut our own throat. By voting "no", we force the MHU to either renegotiate or to go to arbitration with the other unions. While it is true no arbitrator can be trusted to rule fairly, a resounding "no" vote will send just the right message.

We need to get organized to fight this insulting contract proposal and find ways to spread the word. This pay-cut shows that unless we get organized for a fight, management and the union leaders will shove these types of concessions down our throats.

Vote no on the pay-cut!

Solidarity among mailhandlers, clerks and carriers! □

Bush's energy plan zaps environmentalism

The Bush administration released its new "national energy strategy" in February. It has been hyped as a painless program to cut U.S. dependence on foreign oil and reduce energy consumption. But in reality it is just another boondoggle for the giant energy monopolies and an attempt to stamp out the anti-nuclear power movement.

The main part of the plan is to use deregulation and tax breaks to encourage increased production by the oil, gas, coal, and nuclear power industries.

For example, Bush would end the present environmental restrictions and open up oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Range in Alaska. Eventually, the oil monopolies would get their hands on 1.5 million acres of the reserve—oil-rich land they have long lusted after.

Of course if you want to increase domestic oil production that could easily be done by uncapping the wells that have been shut down in Texas, Oklahoma and other states. However, the oil monopolies cannot make as high a rate of profit off these old wells as they can from Mideast oil, and so they keep them shut. Their only thrust for increased domestic production is to open more profitable oil fields—such as in Alaska, off the West Coast, etc. But drilling in these areas endangers the environment and so far has been blocked. Bush's plan is to end the restrictions and give Big Oil what it wants.

Similarly, Bush wants to give free rein to the nuclear power monopolies—in this case by hemming in the mass anti-nuclear movement. The administration plans to enact new rules to eliminate most public influence on the decision of regulatory agencies whether to open new nuclear power plants. The proposal, according to the Feb.

9 *New York Times*, "is intended to eliminate situations in which new plants are held up or permanently closed because of public protest."

At the same time, the White House provides only token assistance to alternative energy sources. And Bush cut from the plan most conservation measures. For example, he specifically axed provisions to increase fuel efficiency for cars and trucks. Both the auto billionaires and Big Oil oppose stricter standards. And Bush would hardly think of crossing them, even though gasoline use is the biggest part of U.S. dependence on foreign oil and one of the biggest sources of pollution.

As a result, Bush's plan won't even cut oil imports, only keep them from growing more. The Energy Department estimates that, if Bush's energy strategy was adopted as a whole, imports would account for 40-45% of the oil used in the U.S. by the year 2010. That's about the same as current levels.

But even if there were a serious plan for energy independence, that would not stop the U.S. drive to dominate world oil or prevent its wars over spheres of influence. The U.S. is a world bully not because of dependence on foreign oil but, rather, because it is ruled by capitalists who make their profits off exploitation and plunder of the working people both at home and around the world. It is these same capitalists' interests that Bush is serving in his energy strategy. Bush is willing to wreck the environment and endanger the masses in the U.S. just so Big Oil and the other energy monopolies can make a few more bucks. □

Bush shifts transportation crisis onto the states

The country's mass transit system is falling apart. Meanwhile, the interstate highway system has never been completed, bridges are in danger of collapse, and roads are crumbling. Everybody knows something must be done. And so on February 13, Bush unveiled a new \$105 billion, five-year transportation plan. But instead of dealing with the problem, it appears Bush's program mainly aims to shift more of the costs onto the crisis-ridden state budgets.

In the first place, Bush would cut funding for mass transit. Federal matching funds for most mass transit system programs would be reduced from the present 80% to only

60%. As well, the plan would eliminate all transit operating subsidies in the big cities. This would tend to encourage states to give up on much needed mass transit and turn more to the highways where the federal government gives a higher ratio of matching funds.

But even on the highways, Bush plans to shift more of the costs onto the states. On the 150,000 miles of interstate and other significant roads, about 75% of the cost for building and maintenance would be borne by the federal government and 25% by the states and cities. Washington would also pay as much as 90% of the cost to rehabilitate

the interstate system. But on a second, much larger tier of roads—about 700,000 miles long—the federal share of matching grants would be reduced to as low as 60%. Since more state funds would be needed to get federal matching funds, money would probably be cut from state-funded maintenance and road projects.

But not to worry, Bush declares, he will give the states more “flexibility”—say, by privatizing the maintenance of roads and bridges with the cost borne by tolls and user fees.

Should the rich, instead, be taxed to pay for the econom-

ic infrastructure from which they get the lions' share of the benefit? But that is not even being considered. Bush is just shifting more costs onto the states, many of which are themselves already in financial crisis.

And the states in turn are squeezing the workers and the disadvantaged, cutting social programs while providing funds to entrepreneurs. The transportation user fees will bear heaviest on the poorest, while privatization will create new sources of profits and speculation for entrepreneurs and also put pressure on wages. □

Operation desert massacre

Continued from the front page

Kuwait. And now Kuwait is liberated. The king (emir) has been restored to the throne. The wealthy Kuwaitis have come out to tell the media horror stories of how their homes and businesses were ransacked by Iraqi troops and secret police.

But what about the majority of the population of Kuwait who are immigrant workers, Bengalis, Filipinos, and Palestinians? These people live in the shantytowns and have no rights. They lived no better or worse under the Iraqis. They had nothing anyhow. Now that the Emir is back he has declared martial law for three months. The regime is preparing to go house to house to interrogate the immigrant workers, especially the Palestinians. They face beatings, jailings, murders, and mass deportations. Even those whose families have been in Kuwait for generations. This is a rich man's liberation.

Why Bush wants us to be proud of this slaughter

Bush and the Pentagon do not want any sympathy for the Iraqi common people who were slaughtered in this war. The Pentagon won't even release any figures on the number of Iraqi soldiers it killed. They won't even return the bodies or dog tags to Iraq. And remember this is the same government that is still complaining about MIA's from Viet Nam.

The wealthy ruling class want the American people to think with the same imperialist logic that they do. “We dominate the world, no one else counts.”

Bush wants us to be proud of the American soldiers who carried out this war. We can sympathize with what Bush put them through. But we cannot be proud of what they

were sent to do. They were used by the imperialist establishment to destroy a nation. They will be thrown away by these same imperialists as soon as the flag-waving parades are over. Bush only wants us to be “proud” of the troops so that another batch can be used in his next war.

Nothing good for the working people in this «New World Order»

Bush has proclaimed a “New World Order” with his victory. This world order has proved to be the World Order of U.S. domination of the Persian Gulf and the world through sheer military might. Bush would like a repeat of the 50's when the U.S. ruling class thought it could rule the world forever. But the American century defeated in Viet Nam cannot be brought back so easily. The US economy is shot through with serious problems, as the current recession is showing. The Middle East is a powder keg, which cannot be mastered by cruise missiles and smart bombs. Hussein may be defeated but the war will unleash unforeseen changes and movements throughout the Arab world.

There is no place in this new world order for the working people. Here at home we will have to keep paying for the Pentagon world cops while poverty and homelessness grow and cities and industries decay. In the Persian Gulf the working people will languish under US backed kings and sheiks who have long outlived their day.

But these are also conditions for revolt. And rebellion there will be. The workers in the US and around the world will not quietly be pawns in the billionaires and generals dreams of world supremacy. The masses who took to the streets against this war are a sign of the upheaval to come. □

Why did the Emergency Coalition try to cancel the Chicago anti-war march of February 25th?

An emergency protest against the start of the ground war was called by the Emergency Coalition for Peace in the Middle East for February 25. The leaders of the Emergency Coalition, however, changed their minds and canceled the scheduled march and tried to restrict the protesters to simply a rally. Many activists were angry about this, and they held a march anyway. Below is the Open Letter on these events issued by the Chicago Workers Voice, paper of the MLP-Chicago.

The U.S. has declared that it won the war with Iraq. It will undoubtedly take this as a signal that it can trample on anybody it feels like.

When the U.S. sent its troops into the region a mass anti-war movement broke out. The bombing of Baghdad on Jan. 16 brought tens of thousands into the streets. In Chicago about 10,000 marched the night after the bombing. Two national demonstrations were held at the end of January in Washington D.C. Between these two, over 400,000 marched against the war.

It was very heartening to see such a movement break out right at the beginning of the war. This movement came up despite the fact that there was no opposition to the war from any official circles. The Democratic Party fell right in behind Bush. The most opposition we heard out of its ranks was that the government should give sanctions a little more time to work and then it could go to war. Even "leading liberals" like Paul Simon started beating the drums of war as soon as the war was "official policy". The anti-war movement broke out despite the tremendous chauvinist campaign of the government and the press. It came up despite the flags and the yellow ribbons floating in the breeze.

The anti-war movement has not developed in a straight line and it has had to face up to various difficulties. How to build the strength and numbers of the movement? How to develop its militancy? How to stand up to the chauvinist campaign of the bourgeoisie? — are all difficulties facing the movement.

One extremely important issue confronting us is building a movement among the masses which is independent of both the Republican and Democratic parties. The Democratic Party tries to present itself to the oppressed people as having something to do with their interests. But both these parties are parties of war and reaction.

Many activists know that there have been two major anti-war coalitions nationwide: the Coalition to Stop U.S. Intervention in the Middle East (the Coalition) and the National Campaign for Peace in the Middle East (the Campaign). There are some differences between these two groups. For example, the Campaign thinks that the Iraqi

invasion of Kuwait should be equally condemned, while the Coalition doesn't condemn Saddam Hussein. However, the criticism of Hussein by the Campaign wasn't from any anti-establishment perspective but only repeated the criticism of Iraq from the U.S. government. Thus, those who dominate the Campaign supported sanctions against Iraq (which is an act of war).

But both these groupings tend to share a reformist liberal perspective on the war and how to end it. Within both coalitions there are those who demanded that the movement had to be for United Nations' negotiations long after the U.N. was fully backing U.S. policy. Both coalitions said the movement should push for Congressional resolutions barring the President from going to war without Congressional authorization. Then Congress authorized the war. At some demonstrations connected with the Campaign a decision was made that there could be no Palestinian speakers. At the January 26th demonstration in Washington, organized by the Campaign, the slogan to "Support our Troops" was heavily pushed. This political stand reflects that these forces want a movement that is as respectable as possible to the Democratic Party, the trade union bureaucrats and other big wigs. They want to keep out all anger, all defiance, all militancy. And they certainly don't want the movement to recognize the fact that it is imperialism that brought this war and that we need to build a movement targeted at the whole system of imperialism.

Locally these politics have tended to center around the leadership of the Emergency Coalition for Peace in the Middle East. We saw how on December 8, a demonstration on State Street was held off until after two very long rallies when most people had left. We were at the rallies of the Emergency Coalition where calls to support the U.N. and to support the Congressional resolutions on war powers legislation were given. They have tried to subordinate the anti-war movement to the mayoral election. We were at the rally in Chicago for people going to the January 26 march in Washington D.C. which was held at Davis headquarters. We were also at the anti-war rally the Emergency Coalition held at Cook County Hospital where Davis did not even actually denounce the war (well, he did call for its "speedy resolution")!

Thus it is not really surprising that the leadership of the Emergency Coalition decided to call off the planned demonstration on February 25. This demonstration was called for the day after the ground war started. They decided that all they wanted was a rally at the Federal Building under the excuse that they might not be able to control a march. Control what? Anger, defiance and militancy. All they wanted was a nice peaceful rally with pleasant songs about "give peace a chance", but no action

actually intended to achieve those goals.

Activists were right to be angry at this sabotage of any militancy in the movement. They were right to want to go beyond this milquetoast approach to building opposition to the war. They were right to connect this with the fact that many in the leadership of the Emergency Coalition support the Democratic Party and that many of them were actively working for Danny Davis and wanted the movement to funnel its energies into this campaign. And, after all, the Emergency Coalition wouldn't want to have a demonstration out of control on election night eve.

So a large section of activists at this rally decided to march anyway. The bankruptcy of the leadership of the Emergency Coalition was shown even more when attempts were made to physically keep the marchers from starting the demonstration.

The march wound through the streets of downtown Chicago shouting angry slogans. The demonstrators were harassed and attacked all along the way by Chicago police. They ran their horses into the march when it went into State Street and continued to run their horses up into the demonstration once it was pushed to the sidewalk. Then at every street corner they attempted to break off sections of the demo and continued picking out people for arrest. Nevertheless the marchers remained determined to keep up their demonstration against Bush's latest war atrocity.

This demonstration was not without its problems. There were some problems of disorganization. At times people did not know where the march was headed or what to do next. This made the march more vulnerable to confusion and also to police harassment.

There were also some disagreements over what to do. Specifically there were disagreements over whether to try to continue to take the streets after the demonstration was

pushed out of State Street.

Taking the streets raises the militancy of a demonstration and can be a good thing. After all, we need to find ways to build a movement that is spirited and angry, is not bound by reformist legalism, and is defiant against the government. Whenever it is possible, it is good to take up more militant forms of struggle.

But it is not a moral question that we have to take the streets or that there must be arrests at each action as a moral statement against the war. Sometimes this idea comes from the outrage and desperation that the activists feel at the situation, but we need to organize our outrage if we are to really challenge imperialism.

Some dispute over these questions arose at the march on February 25. And this dispute led to some confusion and disarray in the demonstration.

We don't think activists should be too discouraged about these problems. Instead we need to learn from our experience and forge ahead.

The victory of U.S. imperialism in the Persian Gulf starts a new phase in the oppression by the U.S. of the people of the Middle East. We need to keep building a movement against this—a movement that demands that U.S. imperialism get out of the Middle East. This movement needs to build support for the working people of the Middle East who are fighting U.S. imperialism and the reactionary regimes of the region. We need to go out among the working people, the poor, and the oppressed minorities to build a movement against the warmakers and for a new society that uproots militarism altogether.

Let's build up a revolutionary opposition to the imperialist system, so that each generation does not have to keep waging an anti-war struggle, so that we can do away with imperialist war altogether. □

Anti-imperialism, Kurdistan, and the rule of Saddam Hussein

The San Francisco Bay Area branch of the MLP sponsored a forum on February 27 on the path for the anti-war movement. At one point, a comrade who had visited Kurdistan took up the issue of whether opposing U.S. imperialism meant supporting Hussein's regime. Excerpts from her remarks follow:

How is it that if we call for the defeat of U.S. imperialism it doesn't automatically mean support for the Iraqi regime?

There is a line in the movement which says that a stand against imperialism must mean support for the Iraqi regime. We think that this view undermines the building of a serious anti-war movement just as does any view that says the U.S. should have used sanctions longer or more effectively.

There is an inter-capitalist power struggle. They're fighting over oil and petrodollars and to decide who will have the regional say so.

It was thought that I should prepare the presentation on this question because I have visited Iraq and might be able to give some insight into the tyrannical nature of that society.

When I was in Iraq in the winter of 87-88 I was mainly in the mountains of Kurdistan. I saw the part of Kurdistan which is located in Iraq.

I did however fly into and out of Baghdad, and I spent several days there. As well, I was taken by car from Baghdad past the ancient city of Samara, past the vast oil fields of Kurkuk, and I spent a night and a few days in Sulimanya.

I have spoken before about my experiences in Kurdistan. I saw the camps, the tent cities of the Iranian Kurds of the CPI and Komala, on the border between Iran and Iraq. It was like stepping into the 20th century from the middle of the 12th. On our side of the barbed wire were radio communications beamed all over Iran and Iraq. There were armed and educated women, there were hospitals, schools for field medicine, hot showers, central kitchens, classes in marxism, training in warfare.

On the other side of the fence was the life of the Iraqi Kurds. I was left with the indelible impression of Kurdish villages that had been bulldozed by the Iraqis. You look over, and there is just the foundations of what was once not just a village, but more rightly called a small city of 15,000 people, now just rubble, just the rims around the houses where they had stood.

Saddam Hussein's regime has a genocidal policy towards the Kurds. The kinder, gentler way of dealing with them is forced relocation, such as has happened over the course of a generation around Kurkuk so that the Arabs would control what was really Kurdish oil.

The more brute way is this bulldozer method in which the Kurds are given an hour and a half to get out of their homes and then they are dynamited and bulldozed to the ground. The wells are poisoned and the people just left to fend for themselves. The regime has a policy of reclassifying cities to villages so that they can destroy them and somehow it is legal to do so under their law. The people in Sulimanya were quite frightened of being reclassified at the time I was there, as there was a lot of talk about it. Sulimanya was a large city, mainly Kurdish.

So how do they fend for themselves? I saw families living in caves, or overhangs in the mountains with just a sort of covering at the front. The children suffer disease as in any poverty-stricken corner of the globe. The women are old at 25, the men migrate to find work 4 to 6 months out of the year.

The Kurds were at war with the Iraqi regime, and it is said that at night the mountains are theirs. And I did hear shelling many nights of my stay there. But what this war against the Kurds also means is the constant presence of Iraqi troops throughout the mountains of Kurdistan, and the constant checkpointing during the day, stops, searches, documents, harassments.

But what about Baghdad? Perhaps Kurdistan, with its

generations-old war against all regimes, is a special case? Is life any better for others in Iraq?

The society is a capitalist order, developed mainly along the lines that foreign workers do the work and Iraqis are concentrated in the military and administrative apparatus. In 1987 it was just beginning to see the end of the "boom" which had brought 4 million workers from Egypt and the Sudan. By the time I was in Baghdad the war with Iran was stalemated, the economy suffering, and these foreign workers were being sent home. I saw literally mountains of rugs and blankets in the airport because they had to leave these items behind.

Aside from being summarily sent home when the need for their labor ran out, these foreign workers never had any rights, they were not allowed to unionize or organize themselves in any way. Not allowed citizenship. All opposition, be it from foreign or Iraqi workers or leftists, is continually and systematically wiped out by Saddam Hussein's regime.

To defend Iraq's war at this point in time means to defend the regime. Why should the workers be sacrificed to the tender mercies of a dictator which led them into this slaughter? And which oppresses them daily and hourly at home?

Likewise for the Palestinians who were never allowed to demonstrate or mobilize for their case--no matter that Saddam is now throwing a few scuds at Israel.

What about the conditions of women? Well, I and the men that were traveling with me were refused service at restaurants. At others where we were allowed to eat, we were put in the back. At one restaurant, an entire table full of men was moved to another place because they were sitting furthest back in the room, which was, in their eyes, the only acceptable place for me. So they all have to move.

There was an eerie feeling about the streets in Baghdad. Along a main street, where there were movie houses and restaurants and hotels, there were absolutely no women walking. The women were seen going into mosques, and doing some shopping. But as for a stroll on the boulevard, no way. The women are definitely second class, back of the bus, keep yourself hidden. This is yet another sign of the backward nature of Iraqi society.

...
There was nothing liberating about Hussein going into Kuwait.

Any progressive consequences of this war will only come about as an inadvertent outcome desired as little by Hussein as by Bush. Any picture of a workers' struggle in Iraq or the region as a whole will come about as a result of rebuilding, reorienting and strengthening the progressive movements in the region. And Hussein makes, nor will he make, no contribution whatsoever toward that end.

We say, organize against the imperialist bourgeoisie in the U.S., and support the Middle Eastern toilers against their own exploiters and oppressive regimes. Don't defend the Iraqi regime--defend the Iraqi toilers. No to Bush and Hussein, it's a poor men's fight for rich men's gain! □

Correspondence: **Anti-war actions in Amherst, Mass.**

Feb. 23, 1991

Dear *Workers' Advocate*,

Due to the massive mainstream press censorship of events concerning the anti-war movement, I thought it would be a good idea to report what is happening here to the *Workers' Advocate* since recently you have made much more accurate reports of events around the country.

I am a freshman at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, Mass. Thursday, Feb. 21, was International Student and Youth Day of Action. On that day there were massive rallies planned for all the colleges in the area. All these rallies turned into marches which all converged in the town common of Amherst at 1:00. There were several speakers who denounced Bush and his foreign policy. They also denounced the media for its censorship of all mass actions (including this one!). Newspapers estimated the crowd from 500 to 700. But I can securely say at least 1,000 protesters were there, carrying signs and chanting. Students were out in force from the University of Mass., Hampshire College, Mt. Holyoke College, Smith College, and Amherst College.

Then after the speakers finished, the students took to the streets! The two major intersections of the town were filled with students sitting-in. Chanting of slogans such as "What do we want?! Peace! When do we want it?! NOW!" and "Send George Bush, send Dan Quayle, send Neil Bush when he gets out of jail" and "The people, united, will never be defeated!" and "1,2,3,4, we don't want your fucking war, 5,6,7,8, USA negotiate!" Near the climax of the action, people were yelling at the top of their lungs and dancing in the streets. We had taken over the whole town.

Then, we were informed that the police were coming and, even though it was a peaceful rally for peace, they were in full riot gear. Myself and 42 others positioned ourselves in the middle of the main intersection and were arrested. But, all the other 1,000 protesters stayed on the sidewalks and cheered us in solidarity. "Thank you", "we love you," they shouted.

Those who were arrested were piled into a small bus and were attempted to be taken away. But the protesters would not allow it! Even though the police station was three blocks away, it took them an hour to get us there. Protesters stopped the bus every two feet by throwing themselves in front of it. At this time the police became more violent—striking one protester in the face and arresting him, pushing the crowd violently with their clubs, grabbing women by the breasts and pushing them aside, handcuffing one student too tightly.

There was continued shouting from the crowd, such as "The whole world is watching," and "shame, shame, shame". There were also calls for the police to join the protesters, but they did not.

A lot of the chanting was led by those who were arrested from inside the bus. More people were arrested for defacing the bus with peace signs.

After finally arriving at the police station at 3:30, we were detained for many hours by the police. The last protester was released at 11:30. There is now incredible solidarity among the 43 who were arrested. We are meeting weekly to discuss legal matters and further mass actions.

This whole event did not "fall short" as the *New York Times* would like to make us think. Thursday was an incredible, unprecedented day in Amherst. It was the day when we showed that the people are more than willing to voice their dissatisfaction with foreign policy. We showed our power, even showing it through peaceful means. We showed that the anti-war movement is gaining momentum, and it is an unforgivable crime not to report it to the nation clearly instead of downplaying it with slanted views and falsehoods!

There is another mass action called for Saturday, March 2nd, in Springfield, Massachusetts. I am sure all 43 of those arrested will be there along with many others. I will try to report what happened there also.

Revolutionary greetings,
[Name omitted]
Amherst, Mass. □

Anti-imperialism and the peace slogan

From Jan. 31 leaflet, with five other anti-war articles, by the MLP-Seattle:

Today one often hears slogans for peace at anti-war events.

"Peace Now" implies the demand to end the war regardless of whether U.S. aims are fully achieved. Taken literally, this demand is indifferent to the continuation of the U.S. military presence in the Middle East, and to what this military backs up: the tyrannical sheikdoms, Israeli oppression of the Palestinians, Western plunder of the cheap oil, and so forth. But a "peace" under these conditions would not only be unjust, it would be the continuation of the conditions that give rise to war after war.

At best, the call for peace reflects the sincere but naive desires of people new to political activism. At worst, it expresses an attempt by liberal and pacifist groups to block

the development of anti-imperialist consciousness. The liberal-democratic call for peace is a call for the maintenance of the status quo, tacking on the illusion that imperialism can be shorn of its inevitable drive to one war after another. The pacifist trends more or less stick their heads in the sand and try to avoid the issues raised by American foreign policy. In either case, the peace slogan acts as a shield for essentially conservative politics.

If our orientation were simply "peace now", our struggle would be nothing more than a temporary nuisance to the government. It could afford to ignore such a peace movement since, among other things, we would have already declared that we will stop fighting on the day the war ends.

If our movement is to "get to the roots", to be truly "radical", it should target imperialism. Such a struggle is in the interests of the working people of all countries. □

Despite police and censorship, anti-war demonstrations in Egypt

From the outset of the Persian Gulf crisis, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak has hitched his wagon to Bush's war aims. This was not dictated by any high principles. The Egyptian regime is heavily dependent on U.S. aid, and saw the anti-Iraq war as a way to get some big debts canceled. Mubarak also saw the crisis as an opportunity to expand his regime's regional power in the Arab world.

This did not sit well among many Egyptians. But Mubarak, no democrat, wasn't about to allow any debate over his policy. He used censorship and police powers to intimidate any anti-war opposition from emerging. Journalists have been arrested, along with opposition political activists. For most of the Persian Gulf standoff and even during the first weeks of the war, Mubarak largely succeeded with his intimidation. A few small protests broke out here and there, but they were readily put down.

But in February, as Egyptians saw more and more of the devastation of an Arab country by U.S. and British bombs, the anger began to boil over. The first mass demonstration took place February 18 in Assiut, 237 miles south of Cairo. 700 students defied the law against demonstrations to march in protest of Egypt's participation in Desert Storm. And even a major bourgeois opposition party, which had been backing Mubarak's policy, began to turn critical.

When Bush launched the ground war, students in Cairo

exploded in rage. Mubarak's police shot at them, killing several. But this only angered the masses further. Students demonstrated for several days—the anti-war protests turning into massive outpourings against police repression.

The Mubarak government has also targeted the local Palestinian population for harassment. Some 100,000 Palestinians live in Egypt. Many have been subject to deportation threats, denial of their right to travel, and police searches and interrogations. The government-controlled press has also run a steady stream of anti-Palestinian articles, charging them with being a threat to Egypt's national interests and domestic harmony.

Mubarak's regime is slated to play a major part in Bush's *pax Americana* in the Persian Gulf. Egyptian troops are expected to be a big part of the multinational forces that are being planned for Kuwait, or even possibly southern Iraq. Alongside the U.S., Saudi and other "coalition forces," Mubarak's troops will be part of the new oppressive policemen in the Gulf. But if the latest round of protests in Cairo show something, it is that the Egyptian masses will not sit still tolerating Mubarak's pro-imperialist policies. Given the country's already deep economic crisis, the Gulf adventure will only be an added factor of instability in the months and years to come. □

Australian "Workers Voice": Oppose imperialist war in the Gulf

The following articles are from the Workers' Voice, P.O. Box 457, Glenroy 3046, Australia. It gives their views on the war; we would not formulate everything the same way. We have also received from them a leaflet of January 26 that was circulated at a workplace and carried articles both on economic issues and on the war. It denounced the "productivity incentive scheme" and "enterprise unionism" as well as discussing "the war program of the Australian capitalist class"; and it compared "the class war against the workers at home" with "the imperialist military war abroad."

The conflagration in the Gulf is a reactionary war. Both sides to the conflict are waging an unjust war for their contending imperialist interests.

The United States, the West European powers and their partners—including the Australian ruling class—have gone to war to ensure that they have a secure and easy access to supplies of cheap oil which was threatened by the Iraqi annexation of Kuwait.

The Iraqi military seizure of Kuwait was for the purpose of expanding Iraq's military and economic power in the Arabian Peninsula. This would have enabled Iraq to have a greater influence over the supply and price of crude oil on the world market.

The big imperialist powers could not tolerate this military annexation because Iraq directly threatened their access to stable supplies of cheap oil from the Middle East.

The Iraqi state is run by a ruthlessly dictatorial regime that up until August 1990 was nurtured and armed by the main imperialist powers—France, Britain, Germany, the United States; along with the state capitalist regime in the Soviet Union. These imperialists not only reaped massive profits from their arms trade with Iraq but also supported Saddam Hussein in the Iraqi war with Iran.

Imperialist war

Despite what certain trotskyite groups and Third Worldists want us to believe Iraq is not waging a national liberation war against imperialist aggression.

This war is an inter-imperialist war, a war for control of a strategic resource (oil), for control of a region that is strategically important both militarily and economically.

Economic warfare leads to military warfare

A reactionary regime that oppressed and murdered its own people decided to assert its military ambitions because its economic circumstances were being undermined by the Kuwaiti feudal-capitalist rulers who were producing oil above OPEC quotas and at lower prices.

Saddam Hussein told the Arab League last year that "we

cannot tolerate this type of economic warfare," and added, "we have reached a state of affairs where we cannot take this pressure." (*The Age*, 05/09/1990)

Iraq could not financially endure this economic warfare and so it resorted to military conquest to strengthen its trading interests. The big imperialists—the major beneficiaries of cheap oil—could not accept this military aggression against Kuwait and the threats it posed on the Saudi oil fields.

The imperialists rushed troops and armaments to Saudi Arabia to wage a war against Iraq who had upset the economic and military status quo in the region; a state of affairs that prior to the Iraqi annexation of Kuwait suited the interests of the big imperialists.

Governments fool the people

This war is not about punishing aggressors. It is not about freeing Kuwait. It is not about upholding international principles of respecting state sovereignty.

Where the likes of Bush and Hawke [the Prime Minister of Australia—*Supplement*] lecture the people about the righteousness of their actions they are deliberately trying to fool the people into believing that the war is being waged in the defense of freedom and the existence of sovereign states. Nothing could be further from the truth. When Bush and Hawke moralize about the need to punish aggression and to uphold the "principles" of the United Nations they are hypocrites who are hiding the real motives for the war.

The people are supposed to forget about the Indonesian annexation of East Timor and the slaughter of thousands of its people; all done with the blessing of U.S. imperialism. The people also need to forget about the U.S. invasions of Grenada and Panama, the brutal oppression by Israel of the Palestinian people, the annexation of Syrian and Jordanian territory by Israel, and the silence of the imperialists who supplied the technical know-how for the Iraqi dictatorship to produce the chemical and gas weapons that were used to murder the Kurdish people.

When military invasion, oppression and annexation serve the interests of a particular imperialist then these actions are "justified". If a rival imperialist power, irrespective of whether it is big or small, resorts to the same means, then the rival group that has its interests put under threat resorts to moralizing to justify its own retaliation and aggression.

Iraqi deception

The Iraqi regime has also resorted to demagoguery and lies to justify its military adventure. Hussein has depicted his war as one being waged against foreign aggressors in

the Middle East; he has promoted pan-Arabism and the defense of the Palestinian people as justification for the war. The Iraqi regime has whipped up nationalism within Iraq to solicit public support. Hussein has camouflaged his aggression and conduct of the war in Islamic colors to gain the misguided sympathy of the Arab masses.

Hussein and his regime are thoroughly reactionary. The Iraqi rulers have resorted to all sorts of deception to disguise their war aims. The Arab people will find no liberation from imperialism by sympathizing with the Iraqi regime. Saddam Hussein only seeks to use the anger and hate of the oppressed Arab masses, who for decades have suffered under the boot of imperialism and zionism, to strengthen his war aim of controlling a greater share of the oil resources so that Iraq can become the dominant Arab military and economic power in the Middle East.

Australian capitalists want to share in the spoils

The Australian ruling class has gone to war so that it can share in the spoils of victory—cheap oil. The outbreak of pacifist sentiments all sound rather hollow and irrelevant while the battles rage and intensify as times go on. The demand for Australia's withdrawal of its ships, the blind faith in sanctions and the United Nations to restore peace all hide, cloud over, the causes of the war and the aims of the imperialist military forces that have been sent to the Gulf. The war with Iraq is not just about destroying its military capabilities, the war is being waged to prepare the groundwork for a permanent U.S. presence in the region and the strengthening of the Israeli military machine, who along with the reactionary states such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt, will police the region on behalf of the big powers, to keep the Arab masses oppressed, to smash revolts against their rulers, so that oil supplies are protected and sold at cheap prices.

The Australian ruling class, through its Federal Labor Government, has expressed an interest in supporting U.S. imperialist plans for the region after the war ends; it wants a place in the "new world order" that U.S. imperialism is boasting about. The imperialist "peace" after this war will be achieved at the expense of the Arab people; the beneficiaries of this imperialist policy to guarantee cheap oil will be the monopoly capitalists of world imperialism.

Hawke and Foreign Minister Evans back U.S. imperialism to the hilt because they see the interests of Australian imperialism best served by going to war with the American forces. Hawke and Evans cloak their propaganda in United Nations' colors, spreading the misconception that the U.N. will play a direct role in ensuring the post-war "peace" and that it will deal with the problems of the Middle East to achieve peaceful solutions. Nothing could be further from the truth. This war has exposed the U.N. to be a bourgeois imperialist tool that provided the umbrella for the U.S.-orchestrated coalition to enforce the economic sanctions that gave the coalition the time to build up the ground and naval forces that were mobilized in January against Iraq.

Struggle against our capitalist rulers

The mounting struggles against this war are best served by focusing the anger and hatred of the workers and people against our own ruling class; our best contribution is to demonstrate and strike against Australia's involvement, to condemn all the parties that are deceiving the people into supporting the aggression as warmongers who are the political tools of the Australian monopolies.

The policy and war aims of Australian capitalism must be opposed and defeated. For this to happen it is necessary to raise the level of the class struggle here against the drive to further intensify the exploitation of the workers by restructuring, rationalization and cost-cutting that are swelling the ranks of the unemployed, increasing homelessness and lowering the living standards of all toilers in Australia. We also need to express solidarity with the oppressed Arab people, and the Palestinian masses in particular, who continue to suffer under the jackboot of imperialist colonial plunder. □

Choice quotes from imperialist warmongers

"We have an interest in there being a world in which aggression by one state against another—the attempted annexation of one state by another—is going to be branded by the world as unacceptable." (Prime Minister Hawke)

"Our jobs, our way of life, our own freedom and the freedom of friendly countries ... would all suffer if control of the world's great oil reserves fell into the hands of Saddam Hussein." (U.S. President Bush)

"The truly vital American interest in the Kuwait crisis is to ensure that the Gulf is the secure and stable source of the industrialized West of reasonably priced oil." (former U.S. Secretary of State, Zbigniew Brzezinski)

"The difficulty of stationing Western ground forces in the area for an extended period was one reason why sanctions almost surely could not have achieved our objective. It would have been impossible to keep over 400,000 troops in the area for the 12 to 18 months that even optimists thought were needed for sanctions to succeed." (former U.S. Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger)

Trades Hall Council doesn't condemn Australian role in war

The Victorian Trades Hall Council [union council for the state of Victoria—*Supplement*] statement concerning the Gulf war doesn't oppose Australia's involvement. It only expressed "concern" at the outbreak of the war and the Australian Government's commitment to the war.

There is no condemnation of the Australian Government

or total opposition to the use of the Australian military. Instead the T.H.C. endorses the utilization of the Australian imperialist navy in the naval blockade to enforce the sanctions. It deliberately ignores the fact that the sanctions gave the coalition imperialists the time to buildup the military forces against Iraq. The sanctions were a part of the rapid war preparations. Its hollow call for an immediate ceasefire and the establishment of a United Nations-sponsored Peace Conference deceives workers into believ-

ing that the very same imperialists who rushed to war would cease the battle at the whim of an empty statement. Are we to believe that the United Nations, which was used by the imperialists to legitimize the war, is expected to pave the way for peace?

The V.T.H.C., along with the ACTU, is playing an opportunist role within the labor movement by camouflaging the reasons for the war and the role of the Australian ruling class. □

Correction:

The article *More on the 'defend Iraq' slogan: Building an anti-imperialist movement or putting hopes in Hussein's military?* in the last issue of the *Supplement* states on page 29, col. 1 that "In 1907, there was the Act of Algeciras." The year should be 1906. □

Portuguese Política Operaria Replying to the American communists

Why was this century's revolution swallowed by capitalism? The communists' faults were but a reflection of a dwarf proletariat unable to lead a gigantic peasantry

The following article is from the Supplement to the 27th issue of *Política Operária*, December 1990. We thank the Portuguese comrades for providing an English translation, which we have used as a basis for preparing the translation reproduced below. We have added endnotes (indicated by numbers in square brackets) with a more precise page reference for quotations. However, with respect to statements taken from MLP sources, sometimes the endnote points out that we couldn't find the given quotation or that it actually is somewhat different in the original.

We welcome the Portuguese comrades giving a detailed presentation of their views on the nature of the present period and the tasks for communist activists. We shall begin replying to their points in the next issue of the Supplement.

Dear comrades,

Accepting your proposal to discuss the Marxist-Leninist Party's declaration "Tasks of workers' communism during the collapse of revisionism", published in *The Workers' Advocate* in January, we present some observations suggested by it.

We have decided to publish this letter because, like yourselves, we consider that a wide discussion about the general line is the most vital priority for the communists all over the world.

How to begin?

Your Declaration is mostly made up of an elementary enunciation of the marxist-leninist principles concerning the communist party, contact with the masses, united front tactics, democratic centralism, internationalism, etc. And, although it proclaims "the need for carrying through a new study of Soviet history and a new study of the basic principles of socialism", the general idea is that the essential task of a new communist current is to go back and stick to the principles that guided the international communist movement before the 7th Congress of the CI.

We do not agree with this point of view. At a moment when the end of communism appears as an accomplished fact to workers all over the world, the new communist trend has to answer this question: why such a movement, which enriched the history of mankind with mighty feats like the October revolution or the Chinese revolutionary

war, got sunk under this loathsome *perestroika*? Why was the proletarian revolution of the 20th century swallowed by capitalism? This should be, in our opinion, the main subject in a statement that wishes, as you say, "to contribute to the discussion among the world's communists of

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what is to be done", because only by answering this living question will we be able to find lively marxist concepts, and, subsequently, a new standpoint about problems such as the party and the revolution, strategy, tactics and style of work. Marxism cannot ever be what it was before, especially after this vast experience.

Your opinion may be that the search for new answers is illustrated in the research articles you published about the history of the Soviet Union. But this is exactly where we detect the same resistance to challenging the old ready-made ideas that were served to us as marxist analysis of the Russian revolution.

That is why we have to disagree, although we want to make it clear that our criticism is also self-criticism of some of our previous opinions. We shall follow the Soviet Union's history backwards, from the present to its origins. Maybe this will make it easier to dismount the chain of faulty reasoning we were educated with and help us to find, in the features of the present downfall, the signs of the *disease* that strangled the revolution.

Is the bourgeoisie "nervous" or rather optimistic?

In your Declaration it is said that "the stagnant system of bureaucratic tyranny is being blown apart" by a "genuine revolt" [1] and that the imperialist bourgeoisie, although it brags of its victory in the cold war, is "a bit nervous about the destabilizing effects of the breakup of revisionism." We think this is a false or even inverted image of what happened this last year. What we see is a bourgeoisie taken by a real inebriation of victory, while the international workers' movement willingly submits to the tenebrous imperialist "democracy".

How is it possible that we have such different assessments? Apparently, your position was guided by the intention of denouncing the bourgeois propaganda about "the failure of communism" and to make it clear that the communists do not cry over the collapse of the so-called socialist camp; to capitalize in our favor the mass movements in the Eastern bloc as well as the loss of credibility of revisionism; to react to the present "anti-communist flood" with an optimistic attitude about the future of revolution.

We think this is a misinterpretation of the real situation. In fact, you can always correctly say that revisionist downfall has clarified the framework of the international class struggle and sets the way to decisive class confrontations to come. But we cannot let general truths hide the hard difficulties that await us in the short and medium term.

What kind of difficulties? By the rupture of the previous equilibrium established between the imperialist camp and the state capitalist camp, the imperialist bourgeoisie obtained a victory that has materialized with several aspects: 1) the masses of people, while challenging the bureaucratic tyrannies, in fact have accelerated the

transition from a worn-out state capitalism to private capitalism; the Eastern workers are being led, in the best of cases, by petty-bourgeois democrats, if not by nationalists and church officials; 2) revisionist collapse, while consummating the last act of the long degenerative agony of the Russian revolution, reinforced in the workers of both camps the idea that socialism is not viable and that there is no alternative to capitalism; 3) when the last obstacles to the reconstitution of the world-wide capitalist market fall away, a vast field shall be open to capital export, attenuating the specter of crisis and giving a new breath to finance; 4) while the Soviet Union gives up its unsustainable place as the USA's rival, while the center of the imperialist contradictions shifts to the USA-Japan-Germany axis, an end is put to the period of relative contention of inter-imperialist conflicts, and new military clashes are being prepared.

Why does your Declaration fail to face this gigantic twist to the right in the world's political situation? To conform to the thesis that state capitalism is nothing but a variant of modern capitalism. Your line of thought seems to be: "An imperialist bloc is sinking, which is as anti-proletarian and aggressive as the Western one—therefore, the capitalist system is weakened." But that is not so. It is a prejudice we inherited from the late marxist-leninist trend and which we can bear no more.

We took an abortion for a giant

The downfall of the state capitalist system was as unexpected to the communists as to all other political forces. We were not able to foresee it because we thought it impossible. No capitalist power in this world would get into such a process of capitulation and disintegration, converting its economic system, renouncing its ideological values, peacefully delivering its satellites, and so on. So much more if it was a powerful and expanding bourgeoisie, as we thought.

This shows that we did not understand what kind of system we were dealing with. Undoubtedly, the marxist-leninist trend was correct when it pointed out that under the fake socialism of the USSR, an anti-proletarian, exploiting and oppressive regime was at work, but we failed to recognize the laws that ruled it. With mechanical logic, underneath the lies about "real socialism", we would search for proofs of capitalist vitality, that often led us to intoxicate ourselves with twisted facts.

We would deny that the pace of work was relatively low, we ignored full employment, the low cost of basic goods and services, because this was not in harmony with normal capitalist exploitation; we closed our eyes to the evidence of the inefficiency and waste of the Soviet economic regime, because we would assume that it was guided by the goal of maximum profit; we would exaggerate the dimensions of private business and appropriation in order to find "proof" that a new bourgeoisie was growing up; we would present the USSR's relationship with

the satellite countries as imperialist exploitation, whereas it comprised most of all a political and military domination and all of this was paid for; we would refuse to see the USSR's real role as a *covering shield* for the national liberation movements, because all of this could not be fit into the image of an imperialist power fighting for its share of the world.

More than once, the idea sprung up in our ranks that the capitalist system was entering a new phase—state capitalism, with the bureaucracy as a new leading class. The USSR, strengthened by the complete monopoly of capital and by the fusion of the bourgeoisie and the party, was only the forerunner of this new phase and was about to become an imperialist superpower. The theory “USA-USSR, equal enemies” (no need to refer to the delirious Chinese thesis on “social-fascism, power of the Hitler type, and main enemy of the peoples of the whole world”) was a striking expression of the marxist-leninist current's incapacity to understand the origins and destiny of state capitalism.

In our case, only in December 1987 did we raise some objections to the “social-imperialism” theory and, even so, we just touched the problem. We realized that Eastern capitalism was not as mighty as we thought. But we did not face the real question: can there be a capitalism without competition, an imperialism without capital export? Or does this apparent exception to marxism indicate only a transient economic and social formation, still in gestation?

The problem seemed insoluble only because we did not want to admit that the Soviet giant covered an economic and social skeleton still under development. It was an embryonic capitalism which, in a militarily powerful country like the USSR, would become an imperialism, also embryonic, but, nevertheless, with no future as an economic and social system, precisely because state control allowed no free capitalist accumulation.

Liquidators of a failed revolution

Now that this regime has come to an end, we can see it in its full shape, as an exceptional, transient and abortive formation, which existed only while society evolves from a failed proletarian dictatorship to the full restoration of free capital and to the reconstitution of all its mechanisms, a highly vulnerable formation, therefore forced to defend itself by repressive control of all social life, in the name of “proletarian dictatorship”.

This regime's bewildering originalities, which seemed to place it apart from either capitalism or socialism (we remind you of the theses about a “new production mode”, the refusal to admit the fact that the bureaucracy could constitute itself as a bourgeois class, since it did not have real appropriation of the means of production, etc.) were nothing but the result of this slow transition.

But the mystery faded away. Nationalized capitalist exploitation, which had provided, in Stalin's time, high rates

of growth, when accumulation was proceeding, was losing its dynamism, while differentiation and competition, inherent to capital, started breaking through the strong centralization and planification that supported the regime. And, as it became an obstacle to better productivity and to capital reproduction, the state bureaucratic bourgeoisie was doomed.

Even considering its fearful military, economic and police resources, it was a fragile bourgeoisie, because of its *substitutive* economic role, because it was born with a subsidiary mission as **liquidator of a failed revolution**, responsible for the administration of the nationalized capital, until conditions were ripe for privatization. Fearing the changes it would have to bear, it struggled with difficulty from the fifties to survive, blocking the path to a raising bourgeoisie, until it finally imprisoned itself in immobilism.

Why there was no anti-revisionist revolution

When, in your Declaration, you praise the “rebellion” of the masses against the rotten Eastern regimes, you try to save some part of the *optimistic* thesis of the marxist-leninist trend that foresaw the revolutionary overthrow of state capitalism. In this perspective, the marxist-leninists had a similar standpoint to that of, for instance, Tony Cliff, who considered inevitable that class struggle in the USSR would assume the form of “gigantic explosions”, which would be “the first chapter of the victorious proletarian revolution”.

Actually, if capitalism was freely at work in those countries, it would evolve towards a clash between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. But state capitalism, as a transition step to the complete reconstitution of capital, had another economic dynamic and gave rise to other class conflicts.

The bureaucratic bourgeoisie could no longer be contained by the “bolshevik” stays of Stalin's epoch, it had no strength or authority to force the discipline of former times upon the workers, and it did not even believe in its own future. The system was falling apart through inoperation, waste, political paralysis, ideological void.

The hope that imperialism would disintegrate was dimming. The ex-communist movement, adapted to the interests of its national bourgeoisies, deserted its role of spear in the heart of the enemy. The nationalist allies which the USSR had bet heavy stakes on, in the hope of weakening the reserves of imperialism, were capitulating and became an unbearable burden.

Such a regime could not be overthrown by a proletarian revolution, contrary to what we expected, for the simple reason that the pressing task was to liberate the capital imprisoned by statization. All economic, social, ideological life pointed this way.

This is why even the demands and upsurges in which there was high participation by workers (Hungary, Poland, etc.) worked unwillingly as accelerators of the capitalist

outburst. This was soon to be understood by the Western bourgeois forces, but not always by the marxist-leninists. While unconditionally supporting the demands of the Eastern workers against exploitation, we cannot have illusions about the significance of the political slogans of their movements at the present stage.

This does not mean that the USSR, China, Poland, etc. are not pregnant with social revolution and might not evolve, in rather short historical spells of time, toward revolutionary crisis, given the unbearable burden that capitalism will throw over the masses. But only when capitalism will no longer be covered by the fiction of "socialist property of the people" will direct class conflicts lead workers to a revolutionary goal and, in so doing, to the communist party.

Why were we so blind to such an evident process of decomposition? Because we did not get completely rid of the romantic maoist thesis of the "revisionist counter-revolution at the CPSU's 20th Congress".

The "great principled fight" had few principles

The Communist Party of China's and the Party of Labor of Albania's campaign against revisionism in the early 60s had the merit of unmasking the new bourgeoisie, its privileges, violence and ideological lies, but it got lost in an unsolved web of contradictions, by situating this bourgeoisie's rise to power at the 20th Congress. It considered that it was a backwards step, that a counter-revolution was in process, whereas what actually happened was that it simply advertized the regime's decay, which had started way back.

In fact, this campaign was revolutionary up to a certain point, because, by criticizing the 20th Congress, it began to rediscover the ideas of Leninism and the October revolution. But it only slightly unveiled them, because this faltering discovery was soon strangled by the dominant anti-marxist tendency; the central goal was to justify state capitalism and its institutions, taking as a model the USSR and CI of the 30s, Stalin's and Mao's policies, etc.

When the Communist Party of China and the Party of Labor of Albania referred to "going back to Leninism and to the spirit of the October revolution", they had in mind their own version of bolshevism, twisted and mutilated. Because their system was still going through a phase of growth, they thought they could escape the liberal degeneration they witnessed in the USSR, by means of close vigilance and of some anti-revisionist remedies. They could not see that, in their own way, they were following the same road the USSR had walked several decades before.

Considering as an impassable gap what were merely two different stages of maturation, they tried to blot out the kinship which linked them with the revisionist countries. By this we do not mean that they deliberately falsified marxism. They could not grasp the social nature of the Soviet state bourgeoisie, which was their own. No wonder

then that their "great fight for principles" was unable to stir up a theoretical revolution—it did not seek revolution, it looked for an intermediate stage between bolshevism and revisionism (which is why we call it *centrist*). It was mainly a delaying battle, in which the state bourgeoisie tried to stop the inevitable evolution, which it suspected would be disastrous.

If we want to really face our past and our ideas about the Russian revolution, we cannot underestimate the conservative burden that this standpoint introduced in the ideology of the so-called marxist-leninist movement.

Rupture has hardly begun

Your Declaration is addressed to "the forces of workers' communism", whose origin is found in "the major confrontations with revisionism which took place as part of the upsurge of mass struggle of the 1960's and 70's". [2] It seems to us that this formula conjures away a critical assessment of the so-called marxist-leninist movement (which is never mentioned in your Declaration).

Certainly no one can reduce the marxist-leninist movement to a mere "internal trend of modern revisionism", as the Swedish comrades of *Röd Gryning* [3] do. This is a historical inaccuracy that dismisses the real process in which the anti-revisionist struggle was generated and in the long run favors trotskyism, whose interest is to attribute to itself a mythical "bolshevik-leninist" antiquity.

But we cannot, on the other hand, ignore that the marxist-leninist movement was born as an external extension of the Communist Party of China and the Party of Labor of Albania, sticking to the defense of their policies and with no true revolutionary marxist structure. To portray it as a "revolutionary wave" and to stress its "passionate revolutionary work" (*Workers' Advocate Supplement*, May 15, 1990 [4]) is to forget that it was, basically, a movement criticizing decaying state capitalism according to the values of ascending state capitalism.

As a contradictory reaction to the early symptoms of the rotting of the system, this movement was bound to disintegrate, and that's what happened. On the whole, the marxist-leninist parties and groups strained to give birth to a fusion of Leninism with stalinism or with maoism, or with both, and, as they were getting involved in political action, they were retracing, with half a century's delay, the degenerative road of the old communist movement. Presently dispersed in a series of rival stalinist or maoist groups, the wrong-named marxist-leninist movement drifts slowly and inevitably towards a "democratic" and "popular" drowning in revisionism.

As for the new communist current, still striving to define itself, it was not born out of the "upsurge of mass struggle of the 1960's and 70's", but only when some contingents (much too small a minority) of the movement first discovered, in conflict with the official line, that the embryos and roots of revisionism were to be found in Stalin, in Mao, in the theory of "people's democracy", in

the 7th Congress of the International, and started to submit the last half century to marxist criticism.

In so doing (and the Marxist-Leninist Party had a pioneer role that must not be forgotten), we began a rupture deeper than the anti-revisionist rupture in the 60s. But in order to guide it to its full potentials, we have to get rid of our exasperating timidity; we have been dragging out, through three partial splits (in 1963 with the USSR, in 1978 with China, in 1983 with Albania), a rupture that still tosses about in obscurities and waverings. To complete the theoretical funeral of the marxist-leninist movement, one has to answer the question that led to its ruin: when, how, why has proletarian dictatorship degenerated?

Albania—why doubt?

The proof that your criticism of state capitalism has not yet severed its links with the short-sighted so-called "marxist-leninist current" can be seen in your attitude towards Albania. Although you admit that it has been "going backward for many years now" and has adopted "revisionist ideas", your Declaration still states, with cautious doubt: "We do not have sufficient information to judge where Albanian institutions have already degenerated decisively into capitalism."

We think that evaluating the Albanian regime is not a question of more or less information, but of knowing whether we really have put an end to the narrow and false notion about proletarian dictatorship inherited from the marxist-leninist current. Even before the recent evidence of capitulation and renegacy by Tirana, there were no reasons for such caution in your declaration. Not only considering the monstrous settling up of the Mehmet Shehu case, or the friendly relationship with Turkish and Iranian fascism; a regime in which there are no signs of free speech or organization of the working masses cannot be a proletarian dictatorship; it is basically similar to the other Eastern countries. Getting to the same rotten degree is just a question of time.

It amazes us that your Declaration refers to the "harmful and dangerous consequences" that may arise for Albania due to the "PLA's stagnation" (!!!); Albania is not "in danger" because it is already lost; the problem with the PLA is not "stagnation" but degeneration. [5]

We can only explain your reluctance in recognizing this fact by the persistent idea instilled by the marxist-leninist movement that the social characteristics of a regime can be assessed by the "correct line" of the party in power and not by the concrete social relations that prevail. So, the Albanian regime, sprung from a people's revolution and led by a communist party that took the lead in the criticism of revisionism, should, according to your opinion, have the benefit of the doubt and be considered "on principle" as a proletarian dictatorship, unless undeniable evidence is provided that the leadership is explicitly renouncing the principles of leninism and of revolution. [6]

But failing to see the capitalist feature of the Albanian

regime because of its anti-imperialist and anti-revisionist radicalism (past history today, as a matter of fact) is, in our opinion, to limit the criticism to state capitalism only in its decaying, corrupt senile stage, without recognizing that it also has an ascending, youthful phase, no less opposed to proletarian dictatorship.

State capitalism was also young

The marxist-leninist trend was right when it referred to the USSR as state capitalism (although it just picked up a notion long used by other trends). But it mixed up all the elements of the phenomenon, due to the fact that it discovered it too late. It thought that the decay of the bureaucratic state bourgeoisie was the beginning of its rise and kept classifying the youthful stage of that bourgeois power as "proletarian dictatorship". This was its main error.

It was argued that one could not mix up the policy and ideology of Stalin's time with the corrupt revisionism brought by Khrushchev. The difference was in fact evident—in the intransigence towards the internal bourgeois forces, the defense of the USSR's economic and political independence, the interest in the international communist movement, the proclamation of a unswerving fidelity to socialism, to leninism and to the road of October.

There were, of course, quite a lot of features in stalinism that were incompatible with leninism and the dictatorship of the proletariat—but it became conventional to explain them by the thesis that it was "a correct line with mistakes, sometimes dogmatic, sometimes opportunist". A good "ideological" excuse to avoid analyzing the real class struggle, a trick often used by the marxist-leninist trend.

Actually, this "correct line" was as imaginary as the "mistakes" and the "deviations". We were dealing with a bourgeois policy in a regime of state property, full of vitality, furiously growing, confident about its capacity and its future, ready to face imperialist aggression, and therefore armed with radicalism and assuming still a counterfeit communist consciousness.

But, because this consciousness was illusive, it had to treat marxism in an increasingly dogmatic and unreal manner and, at the same time, become more and more opportunist, as the only way to defend its bourgeois interests.

When the underground pressure of these bourgeois values in economy, politics, ideology started to surpass the official "marxist" limits, the regime went from maturity to old age, from stalinist centrism to khrushchevite revisionism.

Thus it is of no use to try to evaluate the stalinist regime according to the dilemma "revolutionary or counter-revolutionary?", "marxist or revisionist?", since it does not help us to understand its place in the total trajectory of the USSR. The stalinist regime was placed in an intermediate position, which is distinct from the revolutionary years as well as from the revisionist decay. This is so, because it was

not born out of a counter-revolution, but out of a long degeneration.

Counter-revolution or degeneration?

In reply to the Swedish comrades of *Röd Gryning* [*Red Dawn*] who accused you of an ambiguous position concerning the power shift in the USSR, you stated: "Our Party ... has always held that a counterrevolution took place in the Soviet Union, restoring capitalism economically and politically" (*Workers' Advocate Supplement*, June 15, 1990 [7]) However, in none of your articles do you ever mention the date when such a sudden and violent convulsion occurred, that which should always be present in a counter-revolution, so much more when what is at stake is the shift of proletarian power to bourgeois power (remember the defeat of the Paris Commune).

Your opinion seems to be more of a gradual degeneration of the regime: in the mid-thirties, "the Soviet Union had ... reached a further rung in the process of transition to socialism". At that moment, however, "what takes place is the institutionalization of the revolution in a bourgeois direction. After the turn, the Soviet Union is no longer pursuing a forward march towards socialism, but is in a trajectory of degeneration. In this case, since private capitalism had been largely defeated, the degeneration is towards the state monopoly capitalism..." (*Workers' Advocate Supplement*, January 15, 1989 [8]). This degeneration would prevail, according to what we take from your observations, for a long period of "decline" and "corrosion" between the 17th and 20th Congress (1934-56), during which "it would be wrong to say that all the gains from the revolution are instantly stripped away". [9]

As for itself, the idea of a slow corrosion and decline of proletarian power does not seem to us strange or ambiguous. The claim of *Röd Gryning* that you should indicate the turning point from one power to another, the "qualitative leap", reflects a simplistic notion about the transference of power. Even risking Trotsky's irony about those who imagine that "the reformist film may be reeled backwards", we may perfectly conceive a gradual degeneration of proletarian power into bourgeois power, although the reverse is impossible. [10]

The reason for this is evident. Bourgeois political power, based upon a capitalist economic background to which it corresponds completely, is not liable to be "undermined from within"; it has to be overthrown. But a newly-born proletarian political power, founded on economic relations that are still capitalist, may suffer a gradual and imperceptible degeneration, although there is no formal counter-revolution.

In soviet Russia, there was not a counter-revolution, but a gradual shift in the class nature of the power structures. What we cannot accept is the idea that the beginning of such degeneration may be found in the thirties, the "beginning of the decline of the gains of the revolution" In our opinion, the USSR presents in the mid-thirties other

gains, not in decline but in expansion: the gains of a new bourgeois regime.

1936—proletarian decline or bourgeois rise?

The most striking thing is that proofs that the regime in the USSR had lost by then all proletarian revolutionary characteristics do not have to be enumerated—they are mentioned in your articles. The workers lowered to the category of mere workforce (even before the labor laws of 1938-40, which made the workers liable to prison), the mass shooting and the suffocating political atmosphere, the soviets reduced to an *empty shell*, the new Constitution, the power and the privileges of the bureaucracy, a reborn nationalism...

For some reason, however, these overwhelming proofs do not seem strong enough to lead you to the admission that the proletarian political power was extinct. What is the reason for this? It can only be the fact that the regime was still at that time defining itself in contradiction with the bourgeoisie, based itself on the international workers' movement, and did not adopt an open revision of marxism-leninism. [11]

This centrist standpoint, we have said already, only proves that there was a bourgeois alignment, competing with international capital. What can be seen in the "soviet" regime of that epoch is an impetuous bourgeois climb, full of vitality, that revolutionizes the productive forces and the class relationships. It speaks, of course, in the name of socialism—but "socialism" as conceived by the stalinists, founded on the wrong concept that all exploiting class have about themselves: socialism would emerge automatically from the trinity industrialization/agrarian collectivization/planification; it was up to the party to discipline the proletariat, reform the petty-bourgeoisie through work, guide with a firm hand the intelligentsia, and firmly purify itself of all threats of division, in order to ensure its vanguard role. It was state capitalism in ascent, covering itself with a tenebrous mask of the socialist reconversion of society—the reconversion that could not be undertaken by the proletariat.

And there was undoubtedly, already at that period, the absolute power of the bureaucratic bourgeoisie, administering the state capitalist monopoly, reinforced by the amazing feats of the first five year plan, unified around its talented leader (no irony), Stalin. A bureaucracy that at the time was still accepted as the indispensable guardian of the workers and kokhozians [collective farmers] marching towards socialism, which did not yet take the parasitic and decadent form that it assumed later, and for that reason could deliver itself in full to the terror orgy.

Let us not forget the terror

Your analysis of this period becomes strangely superficial and evasive when it comes to the question of the terror. It is stated that "a bad tendency of developing more and

more harsh laws to deal with social problems" and that "the mid-30s on brings in a stepped-up use of repression" (*Workers Advocate Supplement*, January 15, 1989 [12]; at the same time, stress is laid on the weird exaggeration of some stories about stalinist terror edited in the West—and it finally wipes out this essential feature of the regime: the Moscow trials, the whirlpool of terror in the party ranks, which mowed down the guilty ones, those who were innocent, and those who accused the innocents, the murderous deportation of millions of people, the monstrous increase in forced labor as a source of profit for the state, the suppression of all criticism, the cult of the chief and the "enemy agent" paranoia, the sterile cultural life.

This gives us the impression that you are unable to insert this explosion of terror within the framework of a regime which, in your opinion, was still entering "the decline of the gains of the revolution". And, since you do not want to promote the shedding of crocodile tears by the bourgeoisie, which portrays all attacks on private property as "chaos" and "genocide", you prefer to underestimate the subject.

However, this is a question of principle. It is mandatory to recognize that the situation has nothing in common with the legitimate revolutionary terror of the young soviet power against the bourgeois terror in 1918. We cannot attribute it all to the wrong notion of Stalin about "the exacerbation of class struggle as steps are taken towards socialism". Nor can we reduce this far-reaching explosion of terror to an *excessive* reaction in face of the imminent imperialist attack. There is a social necessity to the unclenching of this blind violence that we ought to understand.

Terror had an economic as well as a political function. It was the cement of Stalin's revolution. Bureaucracy had its first appearance as a dominant class through a gigantic "purification" because it had to contain society under the strain of total monopoly: to preserve its complete authority as *arbiter* between the actual classes, to assure that *monolithism* was total, to replace the lack of capitalist economic repression with police coercion, to *wipe out* workers' claims and private bourgeois corruption, as equally intolerable threats to the regime.

After all, this is in no way extraordinary. A society that, for the first time in history, had control over such powerful productive forces, eliminating the regulating action of the laws of capitalism without substituting collective appropriation and self-administration by the producers, could enforce order on chaos only by terror. As we see it, to believe that a party with a "correct line" could have a better solution to the problem is "marxist" metaphysics.

The party as a mirror of the regime

The "class nature of the party" is stressed in one of your articles as one of the main criteria to evaluate whether at that time there still existed a proletarian dictatorship in the USSR (*Workers' Advocate Supplement*,

June 15, 1990) [13] But it so happens that such nature is shown in the Moscow trials, which are one of the most revealing episodes of the class struggle of that time, and about which you do not say a word.

The "revolution from above" undertaken in 1929, while shaking soviet society, brought about the disintegration of what was still left from the bolshevik party. The stalinists, who led the movement, endeavored to build a party "of a new type" (and a "marxism-leninism" which fitted with it), which produced an efficient instrument of power. Inebriated by the unbelievable success of the five year plan which put an end to the poor, backward USSR, at the mercy of the kulaks and the imperialists, they discovered that they *could do anything*; Kirov's murder set loose a real hunt for the oppositionists, with unashamed resort to the secret police. By 1936, Stalin and his clique had nothing in common with the communist leadership of the previous decade.

What about the opposition? Insulted, dismantled, banned, it also changed its nature during these short years. The whirling social changes had thrown it out of history's course. Stalin dismissed all predictions of catastrophe and achieved what seemed impossible, no matter what the human costs were—"socialism in one country". The workers' support for the oppositionists, already thin, became null, and this sped up its degeneration. The only way out left to them was to overthrow the dictator.

This is what Trotsky expressed in the new platform of "political revolution" intended to free the "workers' state" from the bureaucratic parasitic caste that disfigured it. This meant most simply that the goal ahead for the Opposition was not to lead the masses to a new social revolution similar to that of 1917 (being that "the proof of the superiority of socialism was made", in Trotsky's own words) but to prepare Stalin's overthrow. All the implications are that Trotsky took very seriously the preparation of this "political revolution" and that not all of the charges in the trials were invented.

The charge of fascist spies which justified the executions was false indeed; this fact alone is enough to portray stalinism as an anti-worker terrorist regime. On the other hand, the version about "the old bolshevik vanguard" sacrificed because it kept high the banner of revolution was a romantic legend made up by Trotsky. The truth is that the tumultuous transition to a state capitalist regime, which made new social relations emerge, led to a parallel degeneration of the stalinists and the opposition; the old communist giants were mere midgets. And, since the regime was based on the complete and unshared unification of command, the winners annihilated the defeated without mercy.

Opportunist mistakes or bourgeois anti-imperialism?

In this perspective, it makes no sense to analyze the USSR's international policy under Stalin as stained by

ideological deviations or "unfortunate mistakes", as you do in your articles; it was the coherent external policy of the new bourgeois regime installed in the USSR. [14]

In this, once again, appears the intermediate nature of that regime. It is as absurd to suppose it had socialist motivations, with more or less mistakes, as to compare it with nazism. The bourgeois thesis that the state regulation of economy, the regimentation, and the terror in the Soviet Union were similar to those of nazi Germany, [the USSR] and aspired like it to world conquest dismisses the fact that here there were no expansionist and aggressive groups of financial capital, but a national capitalism searching for an alliance among the popular forces to face the threatening imperialist aggression.

Initially marked by a strong anti-imperialist radicalism (1929-32), stalinist external policy gave way to pragmatism according as the bureaucracy became aware of its interests as a ruling class and delineated a national bourgeois strategy. Skeptical about the revolutionary capacity of the Eastern and Western masses, it looked for new points of support that would provide a truce until the moment when it would be prepared for the imminent imperialist aggression. Hence the ideological and diplomatic turning point expressed in the line of the 7th Congress of the CI.

The reformist and patriotic anti-fascism of the popular fronts (which led directly to the dissolution of the CI and contained already the seeds of the revisionist arsenal) had nothing of a deviation; it corresponded to the international perspective of the new Russian bourgeoisie: Stalin's bourgeois "socialism" tried to establish an alliance with the left-wing of the imperialist petty-bourgeoisie and the nationalist bourgeoisies, with the support of their respective proletariats, in order to build up a protective belt against the imminence of imperialist aggression.

It seems completely out of place to criticize this policy on the basis of proletarian internationalism. It was a bourgeois nationalist policy linked to reformist and pacifist mirages. This gave it its double face: in order to *bribe* the popular fronts, it promoted the dissolution of the CI and reformist degeneration in communist parties all over the world; with its *faith* in the "democratic" bourgeoisie, it doomed the rising revolutions in Spain, in Austria, in Brazil to defeat; and only by lack of power did it not drown the Chinese revolution in compromise.

But at the same time it presented itself as the only policy which opposed nazi expansionism, which it finally was forced to confront. The German-Soviet pact, which still stirs up the sacred wrath of virtuous democrats, was but an episode in the successive maneuvers by which the various bourgeois forces tried to secure some advantage in the war that was about to begin; if we were to consider it as infamous, what could we say about the Anglo-French policy of "non-intervention" in Spain and of Munich, of which it [the German-Soviet pact] was an aftermath.

Can a turn to the left produce a turn to the right?

But how could the victory of the new state capitalist regime be consolidated by 1936—you may ask—if, a few years earlier, at the beginning of the five year plan, "the revolution continued to be alive", there was "an effort to be guided by a proletarian class line" and positive steps were taken in the construction of socialism. (*Workers' Advocate Supplement*, January 15, 1989, [15]) We put the question the other way round: could a living proletarian revolution, bound to socialist construction, drown itself so suddenly in the 1936 bourgeois explosion?

The disaster would have been caused—so you say—by insufficient confidence in the masses, by the abuse of administrative methods, by the euphoria of success and lack of vigilance, by the low political consciousness of the proletariat due to its sudden increase in numbers, by the lessening of organizational work, by the absence of new theoretical answers. But the flaw lies in the fact that these "causes" situate the origin of social changes in the superstructure. How could factors such as these annul the tremendous revolutionary impulse that *should* have been liberated by the overwhelming growth of a planned collective economy, by the elimination of private capital, by the total defeat of the remaining bourgeoisie?

On the contrary, the 1929 turn, were it pointed to socialist construction, would have unclenched, by its success, an unprecedented explosion of revolutionary forces in the whole of society and inside the communist party. If we accept your interpretation of a "positive turn" in 1929, the regressive 1936 turn becomes unexplainable. [16]

This only shows that the "revolution" led by Stalin between 1929/36 cannot be artificially divided into a *good* part and a *bad* part, but has to be seen as a whole. We have to start from the fact that this novel type of revolution, while it put into practice its "socialist" program, gave birth to its actual and unexpected class relations, institutions, ideology; the real ones and not those which it planned.

Thus, the revolutionary fervor of the production communes and of the shock brigades burn out in a campaign against "equalitarianism", in the stakhanovists' corruption and in the barracks discipline in the factories; the violent expropriation of the petty-bourgeoisie ends up in the privileges of the directors and cadres; the "new soviet humanism" blossoms into the concentration camps and the mass shootings; the campaign against opportunism unveils the annihilation of what remains of communist organization; the "cultural revolution" and the atheist campaign degenerate into a regimented culture, in the prohibition of abortion, and the utilization of the church; the radicalism of the 6th Congress of the CI makes way for the reformism of the 7th and the 1930 commitment to the revitalization of the International leads to its practical liquidation.

These are neither contradictory tendencies nor proofs of

Stalin's "cynicism"; they are two stages of the same unprecedented transformation—state capitalism. Hence the apparent incongruity of "socialist" measures that enslave the workers, of a capitalist accumulation that liquidates the petty bourgeoisie, of a nationalism that covers itself with the banner of communism, of a bourgeois order that has to ban competition and, with it, all of the freedoms.

The working class as the shock force for the rise of the bureaucracy

To classify the turn of 1929 as a "counter-revolution" (as does *Röd Gryning* to be consistent with its theoretical scheme and to present its posthumous homage to Trotsky) is to completely falsify the factors. "Collectivization" was a bitter war against the petty-bourgeoisie and its interpreters inside the party, conducted with the active and enthusiastic support of the workers and poor peasants and of the party's left wing (and of the left-wing of the International), who thought that Stalin led a bolshevik "second revolution".

The reasons for the confusion are easy to understand. The striking rise, amid the general capitalist crisis, of this country with no bosses, showing the banners of socialism, of mass education, of national cultures and of women's liberation, appealing once more to the world revolution, caused among the working masses an impact comparable to that of 1917.

This was the image that survived up to now, as part of the left-wing heritage of the Russian revolution, which provokes your sympathy and adhesion. But when you celebrate the "big advances" represented by "large-scale production" as a "foundation" to socialism (*Workers' Advocate Supplement*, Jan. 15, 1989, [17]), you do not take into account that this strange "revolution" did not, at any moment, lead to the formation of genuine organs of proletarian power, as happened in October 1917. And please do not tell us that those organs were the soviets. The soviets were not only "weakened", as you write in your articles, they were administrative organs without political power whatsoever, way back.

Even if we want to consider the communist party of this period as the legitimate representative of the working class, we have to register that this was a new concept of socialism. Lenin had said that socialism was the power of the soviets plus electrification. Stalin corrected this formula; socialism would flow from the power of the party plus electrification.

The working masses showed great enthusiasm and initiative in the transformation of the economy, in the elevation of their cultural level, but, politically, the power and the initiative were never swept from the top leaders of the party; they conducted the operations, in what may rightly be classified as a "revolution from above".

The second bourgeois Russian revolution

Your polemics with the Swedish comrades and with the Iranian comrades of the Communist Party of Iran about the turn of 1929 had the advantage of making us look closer at this crucial moment of change in the USSR. If we face it without the traditional prejudice, we have to admit that a transformation which 1) installs a new social order, founded on the exploitation of producers who work for a wage, 2) unleashes a colossal increase of the productive forces, changing the USSR into a modern power, 3) raises the bureaucracy to administrator of the nationalized capital, can only be classified as a bourgeois revolution, whatever its specific features may be.

Although its promoters celebrated it as the "second October revolution", definitely surmounting the capitalist stage in the USSR, it was in fact, despite their lack of awareness, a second February revolution, a remake of the failed rehearsal of early 1917 to accelerate capitalist accumulation in Russia. But at that moment, with the beheading of the bourgeoisie, and the incapacity of the petty-bourgeoisie for strategic action notwithstanding its reanimation, capitalism could advance only by the total nationalization of capital. That is why Stalin has so little in common with Kerensky.

Hence the workers' support, the "socialist" planification, and the attack against private appropriation and competition—all the things that gave the new regime, in its heroic phase, the look of a proletarian revolution.

Those who allege that a turn to capitalism would forcibly assume an open counter-revolutionary character, smashing the revolutionary gains and institutions, because it would arise in sequence after the October revolution, do not take into account the fact that, between them, there is an interval of *swamp*, of failure and degeneration of the proletarian revolution, the NEP period.

Stalinism as the product of the wearing out of the revolution

But wasn't the Soviet Union facing in the twenties an overwhelming need to industrialize and to collectivize agriculture? Wasn't it only imperialism that was interested in keeping it backward and vulnerable? We have no doubt about this. Condemning the industrialization process as "a bourgeois priority for accumulation over consumption", as the taste for "accumulation for accumulation's sake" only to compete with imperialism, as a sign that Stalin was under the influence of "economic determinism" and considered that the motor of change was the productive forces and not the class struggle—objections that come from different sources—are but a fallback to peasant "mystic socialism" of maoist origin. It is to expect miracles from ideological indoctrination of the masses and refuse to admit that the way to socialism is inseparable from an abundance proportional to a tremendous growth of the productive forces.

In 1927 the USSR had no alternative but to change altogether the productive forces, and this was the **key factor** for the class struggle as it evolved. The *balanced* plan of Bukharin for advance towards socialism "at a snail's pace" was a suicidal dream (and for this reason it pleased the kulaks). The deadlock in the economy, due to the blackmail of the petty bourgeoisie, enriched by the NEP, only left one way out for the regime—to multiply the productive forces, which presupposed a drastic concentration of all property and all power in the hands of the state as a monopoly of the regime.

But of course this would imply the rise of the state administrative stratum to the command post of a dictatorial political power, putting an end to what was left of soviet democracy. The economic expropriation of the petty bourgeoisie meant thus a new step to the political expropriation of the proletariat. **And this dilemma would precisely mean that the October revolution's potential had dried out.**

The desperate point at which the revolution stood is reflected in the *prodigious, super-human* character of the stalinist option. Because the pressure of the peasants had forced the *backstep* of the NEP and because European revolution did not come to the rescue of Russia, the party had to take advantage of the control of power to *produce* the social conditions for a future socialist revolution: if there was no working class to exert dictatorship, it had to be created; if the peasants were allied no more to the proletariat, they had to be **eliminated** and a new peasant class should be formed, collectivized, faithful to socialism. Undertaking this gigantic work of *social engineering* was of course the task of a stratum that would administer the state-party, invested with extraordinary powers (only temporarily, so it was thought...).

That is to say: the crisis placed before the bolshevik party the desperate contingency of producing, by jumping over the abyss, the foundations of a new revolution. Can there be better proof that, in 1929, the soviet revolution was but a mere memory?

"Socialism In one country"

In your discussion with *Röd Gryning* the old dispute emerges between stalinists and trotskysts, that took place during the inner-party fight in 1923-28, in which each side claimed to be the genuine defender of the "legacy of leninism". But one must not take this polemic literally. At that period, at stake was only the choice between the ways to reinforce state capitalism, installed with NEP. Leninism was already out of the question.

The debate stirred up by Trotsky about the impossibility of "socialism in one country", an academic debate as were almost every one of his *principled* battles, was meant to cover, under grandiose phrases about world revolution, a perplexity that was common to the bolshevik leaders; if the world revolution was not to occur soon, what was to be done with a Republic of soviets bogged down in small

production?

Undoubtedly, Trotsky and the other opposition members had an acute perception of the bureaucratic illness, they rendered accurate criticism to the opportunism in external policy, but they had no integral alternative because they shared with Stalin the same economic and social premises. The main documents of the so-called "Left Opposition" tell us so. This was the reason why they were politically disarmed when "the new Bonaparte", instead of delivering the power to the bourgeoisie, as they predicted, threw himself against it and built up "socialism in one country", which they thought impossible.

Stalin overpowered Trotsky, Zinoviev and Bukharin, not because he was "wiser", but because he interpreted better the national bourgeois needs that hid under the slogan of the "advance towards socialism". With the antagonistic perspectives of the two rival trends of right and "left", he delineated, by experiment, the two phases of a single political program: first, with the peasants and the petty bourgeoisie, to reconstitute the economy, to gain time, and **above all**, to organize the apparatus of power, the party "of a new type"; then, against the petty bourgeoisie, for industrialization with forced marches, for agrarian collectivization, for "socialism".

With this twofold movement, was cut the knot of the dilemma in which the USSR was being tossed about—it was not compelled to choose between wasting away or a free course to private capitalism; a "second revolution" could be made, one that even Lenin had not dreamed of. Only this "revolution" meant the final liquidation of all that October 1917 stood for.

Transition measures to socialism or to capitalism?

The need for special "transition measures to socialism" in a country like the Soviet Union is dwelt upon insistently in your assessments, as justification of the party options during the twenties. In our opinion, this perspective hides the capitalist reconstruction that took place under NEP, and this is because you fear to disavow the policy started up under Lenin's direction and "pass over from criticism of Stalin to criticism of Lenin".

To say, as is usual when referring to the degradation of political and party life in the twenties, that Stalin was wrong when he transformed exceptional measures to permanent principles, was twisting Lenin's orders, etc., is to refuse to criticize the NEP policy. The truth is that, as he announced the transition to a state capitalist regime and, later on, to NEP, with all its implications (management methods, unshared authority for factory directors, bureaucratic multiplication, concessions to foreign capital, freedom, under surveillance but freedom all the same, for the petty bourgeoisie, abolition of workers' control, consecration of privileges, "scientific and rational organization of work", all power concentrated in the hands of the party, platforms forbidden, etc.) Lenin opened the way that

Stalin traversed.

He never denied that these were backward steps dictated by an emergency situation, contrary to Stalin, who presented them as "socialist" principles. But, if the latter was more and more driven away from Lenin's revolutionary clearheadedness, that was because the chosen way was becoming more and more narrow and led those who travelled it to a cul-de-sac. Once in operation, NEP molded the party and its leaders to fit it. In 1928, the dictatorship of the proletariat in the USSR was lost and its leaders destroyed as bolsheviks.

Does this mean that we should *blame* Lenin for having no foresight about the long-term consequences of state capitalism and free trade? This would be to disregard the extreme emergency which the soviet power was curtailed by. These measures were applied not as a part of the bolshevik program but as a last resource for an exhausted country that needed time, until help would eventually come from somewhere. Since this help did not come, NEP acted actually as an accumulator of forces for capitalism, not for socialism.

Is the party of a "new type" the same that led the revolution

Again because of your fear of attacking Lenin by criticizing Stalin, you are driven to an extreme reserve about the evolution of the bolshevik party—and we are not referring to the terror in the thirties but the twenties. However, this is one of the central elements for following the way the soviet revolution degenerated.

Stalin could defeat his adversaries mainly because he foresaw, before anyone, that the key to the novel situation in Russia would be to build an entirely new party, *cleansed* of inner conflicts, which could be the armature and the aggregate inflexible force of the new power. Once again on this issue his authoritarian inclinations and "will for power" melted together with the objective requirements of the transition to capitalism.

Although Stalin never expressed it so, the logic of his action reveals that, for him, it was all a matter of *correcting* the tradition for polemics in the bolshevik party, the *softness* of Lenin towards the opposition and, above all, the *intolerable* co-optation of Trotsky as a dominant personality in the party. He tried then to make marxism a moulding material for tactical purposes and democratic centralism a synonym for unanimity-ist terrorism.

Questions of Leninism, which shaped the thought of generations of communists, and which the Marxist-Leninist trend insists on defending as a classical work for the fight against opportunism, shows how that kind of party of a "new type" takes form, that later was to be exported all over the world: the idea of political struggle as a series of military campaigns in which the revolutionary line is reduced to a question of tactics (because we have already inherited theory from the classics...), quotations in *pills*, ready to "absorb", a climate of coercion in polemics with

gagged adversaries, the demand for a "complete and absolute" unity in action, in which the presentation of platforms, prohibited by the 10th Congress [of the Russian Communist Party in March 1921], is banned forever and the dissidents are not afraid of being defeated in an ideological struggle (it is a "rotten idea") but of being expelled.

The bolsheviks had forged, under Lenin's leadership, a powerful workers' party, most suitable for revolution and the conquest of power. It was Stalin's task to remodel it as the headquarters of the fortress of state capitalism. But it must be said, as opposed to trotskyism, that this work was an aftermath and not a cause for the degeneration of the revolution.

The void in power

We do not think you can present evidence to confirm your idea that, notwithstanding the zigzag of NEP, "power remained in the hands of the proletariat" (*Workers Advocate Supplement*, January 15, 1989 [18]). Everything leads us to the conclusion that by then the proletarian power was already in agony and, from then on, lived its last moments.

The Kronstadt rebellion and the threat of general peasant uprisings, in early 1921, marked a turning point, not because bolshevik repression had a counter-revolutionary character, as claimed by the anarchists, but precisely because these uprisings, which gave voice to the petty bourgeoisie, with its demands for freedom of trade and "soviets without bolsheviks", won wide support among the masses. The danger Lenin foresaw was coming true: "Soviet power is based on the alliance of the two classes; if that alliance is broken, it will be lost."

An equilibrium of forces was thus reached which was temporarily insoluble. The proletariat could not rule any more, but the extent to which the bourgeois order was dismantled would not allow the bourgeoisie to regain power. The regime could not advance towards socialism any more, but the impulse given by the revolution blocked the way back to capitalism. Under the dictatorship of the communist party, a social void of power was formed, which sooner or later would have to be filled.

It is this social void of power that explains the extreme polarization of all political questions at the level of the party's leadership, around 1921-22. Why did Lenin direct his last efforts to propose a reform of the central organs of the party, to avoid a split due to the conflict between Stalin and Trotsky, or to try to correct the inefficiency of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection by creating a super-organ of technicians, or to conceive a command organ for Gosplan independent from the authority of the soviets? It was not from lack of consideration for the class struggle, but because the destiny of power was already, at that moment, hanging from the superstructure—a sign that everything was lost.

The apparatus of power was not any longer formed by

a network of democratic mass organs, but by the party, leaning on the bureaucracy, mostly inherited from czarism. No matter all the dangers that everyone knew could arise, the only way to quench the threat of disintegration was to invest the party executives with more and more power, based on a bureaucracy that was becoming always more invasive and all-powerful. The proletarian democracy proclaimed by the revolution was gone; soviet power was lost too, it must be admitted.

When the soviets became an empty shell

Your timid hypothesis that the soviets had "weakened" because "times of ebb in mass activity" had started (*Workers' Advocate Supplement*, April 15, 1989 [19]) disregards the catastrophic situation existing when NEP was adopted. Already in March 1919 Lenin verified that the soviets were reduced to ruling organs for the workers. Some time afterwards, their power was completely transferred to the party.

The soviets—like the factory committees and the poor peasants' committees, that is to say, all the genuine revolutionary organs—were sunk or dissolved during the enormous convulsion caused by the imperialist intervention and the civil war. Not on account of the "authoritarianism" of the bolsheviks, as the anarchists claim, but because in peasant Russia, surrounded by the chaos of war and hunger, there was no chance any more of a decentralized, self-organization of the workers, as the soviet regime was supposed to be—and the last resort was an ultra-centralized and militarized power.

But this means that the victory of the soviet regime over the intervention and the civil war was only illusive. The international bourgeoisie, although having failed in its goal of installing in power a counter-revolutionary government, annihilated the soviet revolution all the same. It slaughtered an already small working class, it destroyed industry, it dismantled the economy, it made most peasants and petty bourgeois, with the SRs and mensheviks leading the way, turn to the right, it made the situation unbearable and left no alternative to the bolshevik party but the dictatorial control of power, by means of emergency measures.

On the other hand, the storm of criticism that the various left oppositions addressed to the party's leadership (namely the ones formulated by the left bolsheviks) pointed undeniably, in many instances, to all kinds of deviations and made prophetic predictions on the consequences of bureaucratization, but their so-called alternatives (like delivering the economic power to the trade unions) would have led to an even quicker disaster, by the disintegration of the central power.

When we today confront the various positions in the struggle at the 10th Congress, what strikes us is that the alarms in every one of the platforms were partly correct but there were no alternatives at all. It was the very situation that barred the future to proletarian power.

Were the soviets essential?

As a whole, we see no special interest in your articles about this question and this is not accidental, we think. It is the result of a tradition inherited from the marxist-leninist trend which, in its campaign against Khrushchev's revisionism, practically forgot the criterion that should logically be in the center of the debate—how could a regime where there were no organs of proletarian democracy be socialist?

The role of the soviets as pillars for the proletarian dictatorship had become long ago, in the communist movement, a conventional expression, a simple propaganda banner. To such an extent that the initial years of the revolution, in which the soviets had exerted an effective power, were seen as a kind of anarchist leftism proper to "heroic times". On this subject, perhaps more than on any other, a deep gap was opened between the theory and practice of the communist movement.

As for the subject of the dictatorship of the proletariat, what survived up to now, through the marxist-leninist trend, was a revised version by Stalin: "Proletarian dictatorship", he wrote in 1926, "consists of the party's decisions, plus the fulfillment of those decisions by the proletarian mass organizations plus their practical execution by the population."(!) [20]

Although condemning (only sometimes, and in a low voice) this "excessive" vision, the communists still considered as natural the fact that proletarian dictatorship, surrounded and under fire, expressed itself through the dictatorship of a party, by analogy with the period of political dictatorship in bourgeois regimes.

We read in the revolutionary communist press a thesis that a first phase, of "provisional government of proletarian dictatorship", based on extreme centralization, would be normal and necessary as a preparation to pass to a second phase of gradual enlargement of workers' democracy; this did not occur in Russia, however, only due to "Stalin's and the party's ideological weaknesses". [21]

This reasoning simply ignores that proletarian dictatorship does not allow the same margin of delegation of power that bourgeois democracy does; while bourgeois power leans on the automatic movement of capital production and reproduction and can therefore be exerted through more or less representative assemblies, military regimes, etc., proletarian dictatorship only survives as long as the direct organs of power of the productive masses paralyze the stubborn resistance of the bourgeoisie, daily eliminating the capitalist mechanism and destroying what remains of the old order. No revolutionary decrees, no actions of the communist vanguard or of police coercion can replace this machine that grinds capitalism, represented by the power of the workers' soviets, led by the political initiative of the working class. For this very concrete reason, and not for romanticism or demagoguery, Lenin wrote that proletarian dictatorship "has to be a thousand times more democratic than the most democratic bourgeois

republic". And, because that was not possible, so was the Russian revolution lost.

About an idealist conception of history

Where did it come from, the receptivity of the communists for historical *explanations* that invariably blame everything on "Stalin's negative character flaws", on "Trotsky's splittist action", on the "theoretical weaknesses of the party which let to not reckoning with the warnings from Lenin"? It sprung from the idea that working class power could be reduced, in the final analysis, to the political power of the communist party. The party's line was to become the criterion to know whether proletarian dictatorship persisted, instead of asking when workers and peasants had really exerted power. It considered that all class struggle would be expressed through the party. And, logically, the next step was to see it expressed in the party's leading personalities and, finally, merely in ideas.

We are not trying to make a joke out of it. We have repeatedly read that revolution was lost due to the "lack of theoretical preparation of the proletariat" or to the "lack of a clear economic perspective on the part of the bolsheviks". In your materials we can also find profuse examples of this kind. The wrong ideas "were an important factor behind the evolution toward state capitalism" [22]; "socialism declined because in the mid-thirties the soviet leadership abandoned the revolutionary path" (MLP's Third Congress [23]); "the soviet leadership revised marxism-leninism, which allowed an anti-worker bureaucracy to the lead the Soviet Union onto the path of capitalist restoration" (the *Worker Advocate*, November 1, 1989 [24]); "if in 1936 there were correct answers, everything could still be saved" [25]; "unfortunately, at a certain time, party leaders abandoned the leninist path"; etc., etc.

Of course the leaders' ideas have a decisive influence on the events, needless to say. But is it not a task of marxism to look for the social, class roots that give a general framework to these ideas? Don't you think that to blame the events on the leaders' choices somehow does not take into account the class movements that expressed themselves in those choices?

State capitalism has to be studied as a social, economic system that came about in definite historical conditions and according to definite laws; not as a mistake, a deviation or a sin. It is time for us to break up this tradition brought by stalinism, which reflects the loss of contact of the revolutionary leadership with proletarian interests and starts imagining socialism as separate from the real dictatorship of the proletariat. With this logic, the Party of Labor of Albania could *prove* through this logic that its rise to power had established in Albania the proletarian dictatorship, even though there was no proletariat in the country...

Must we question the leading role of the communist party?

As is the case regarding many other passages of your Declaration, we have no objections whatsoever to those which refer to the importance of the communist party as "the highest form of class organization of the working class" and which repudiate anarchism and social-democracy. [26] What we criticize is the fact that you ignore the new question brought about by the Russian revolution—how can the communist party, after the revolution, exert its role of political vanguard, without taking the place of the mass organs of proletarian power? This has also become a forbidden subject for the marxist-leninist movement, together with everything that would seem to question "the leading role of the party".

As we see it, we think that one cannot go on repeating the stalinist "lesson", limited to ensuring by all means power for the party, since it was seen as the most perfect expression of proletarian dictatorship. Life showed us what the final product of such philosophy consisted of. The party, which held unshared power, was invaded by the contending social currents and the "impregnable fortress" changes its quality from inside, without even realizing it.

Must we then adopt the points of view of the "democratic" critics of the Russian revolution, of all those who considered the communist party as the enemy of the soviets, the grave-digger of workers' democracy? By no means. We believe that, in new revolutions to come, parties fighting one another, as a superior form of class struggle, will express themselves **through and not at the expense of** the soviets, the trade unions and other organs of proletarian democracy.

The dilemma in which the Russian revolution lost its way—either the party drowns the soviets (and all the other forms of democratic expression) or the soviets are captured by the petty bourgeoisie and drown the revolution—is in no way a general law. It only shows that class relationships were not ripe for proletarian dictatorship.

The usual argument of all "democratic socialists" that leninist "vanguardism" led the bolsheviks to take power on an exclusive basis and to outlaw the other parties deliberately leaves out of consideration the circumstances in which the coalition of soviet parties wished for by the bolsheviks became impossible when the mensheviks and SRs allied themselves to the camp of counterrevolutionary.

Therefore communists do not have to regret the fact that they constituted themselves as the vanguard of the proletariat revolution. The lesson that is to be taken from the soviet experience is that the wider, the more diversified and creative the network of organs of proletarian democracy, the most favorable will be the conditions for the political leadership of the communist party to lead the revolution through its successive phases, in contention with the parties of the petty bourgeoisie.

Was Kautsky right after all?

In summary: to discuss whether the Russian revolution could be saved with some other policy seems senseless to us. The dictatorship of a dwarfed proletariat, surrounded by a gigantic peasantry, besieged, attacked and disorganized by imperialism, had no strength to survive, was reduced to gaining time and to agonizing, unless some other revolution would come to its rescue.

That is why we say the Russian revolution could not triumph because it was, like the Paris Commune, the work of a proletariat "which tried to conquer heaven". The forerunner and announcer of new proletarian revolutions that are still ripening, it could not produce more than brilliant intuitions and embryonic experiences for the establishment of proletarian dictatorship and the transition to a socialist economy.

You will possibly say that this is a "pessimistic" vision of the revolution and it leads us to the "theory of the productive forces" with which Kautsky and the mensheviks tried to demonstrate, in the name of marxism, that proletarian revolution in Russia was premature, was a utopia formed out of Lenin's "blanqui-ism", since the economic and social conditions would not allow more than a bourgeois revolution.

We do not accept such criticism. We have no doubt that the bolshevik party was right to take advantage of the crisis of the bourgeois power, in order to guide the proletariat to overthrow it. The early years of the revolution proved, moreover, its authenticity, its tremendous vitality and potential. Proletarian revolution was as possible and necessary in 1917 in Russia as it is today in every country—but this does not mean that it was not subject to the course of the international revolutionary movement.

The *marxist prudence* of the social-democrats of yesterday and today on "the impossibility of forcing history" has something to do with their attitude of deputies for the bourgeoisie. Marx's well-known and often cited formula—"no social order disappears before all its productive forces are displayed; and new higher relations of production only come about after the material conditions for their existence have ripened within the bosom of the old society" [27]—refers actually to the global historical succession of modes of production. Applied to each country and to each period in particular, as if the proletariat would have to wait for the completely decay of its bourgeoisie before even thinking of socialist revolution, it becomes grotesque.

We are living in the imperialist epoch, in which the transition from capitalism to socialism takes place, an epoch that expresses itself in a multiplicity of revolutionary situations in countries with very different levels of development. In every one of them, the communists will be the ones who will be able to interpret and set in motion the revolutionary demands of the proletariat. The bolshevik party remains, up to now, as the most thorough example of the fusion of marxism with the workers' movement.

Lenin and the bolsheviks cannot be blamed for not

knowing beforehand what would become of the revolution. They knew that their revolutionary duty was to take advantage of the bourgeoisie's incapacity and lead the revolution as far as possible, while expecting that imponderable factors, like a revolution in Germany, would create a strong basis for a combined development on the way to socialism. Although this support could not be obtained, still they did not capitulate; they entrenched themselves, as they foresaw a long siege. This is what makes their action a model of revolutionary behavior during those brief years that were the highest peak in the history of mankind. They were submerged, from 1920-22 on, by an agony of the revolution that was not up to them to avoid.

A revolutionary cycle is being closed

What is after all the main difference in the assessment we both make on this century's revolutionary movement? For you, revolution was lost on account of a series of mistakes and deviations that took place successively in the Soviet Union, China, Albania. For us, those mistakes were the necessary manifestation of the limits of the very movement. The degeneration of the revolution occurring in a quarter of the planet during this half century is too great a phenomenon to be explained by unfavorable conjunctions, treasons or hazardous conditions.

From 1917, a first cycle of the world socialist revolution opened, expanded, and finally closed down, which was marked by a series of revolutions in countries where capitalism was incipient. Sustained by an alliance with the peasantry, the proletariat was able to take the lead of the revolution which the bourgeoisie was no longer in a condition to control, in those "weak links of the imperialist chain"; but the same economic backwardness that made it possible for it to be the protagonist of the revolution dictated afterward its failure. Since the conditions were not ripe for the transition to socialism in those countries, the revolution sunk under the weight of the unachieved capitalist tasks, and the proletariat was submerged by the petty bourgeois mass.

In fact, what was new in Russia was the fact that the workers' revolution could triumph because it was able to draw after itself, arm, and organize a peasant anti-feudal revolution. Workers' revolution, pointed toward socialism, putting at its service peasant revolution pointed towards capitalism—this was the peculiarity of 1917, proper to an epoch in which the delayed bourgeois revolutions started being *run over* by the first proletarian revolutions.

In China, Vietnam, etc., the combination was even more complex, because the proletariat, in order to gain hegemony, had to satisfy not only the claims of the peasant masses, but, also the nationalist claims of the whole petty bourgeoisie, which marked the revolution in a more hybrid and ambiguous way. The so-called new alternatives that tried to take inspiration from these experiences could only add to the dilemma that the Russian revolution revealed in all its vividness: if the proletariat is not strong enough

to exert its dictatorship, how can it possibly draw the petty bourgeoisie to socialism?

Mao's "creative innovations" on the construction of socialism in a backward country—"new democracy", "walking on two legs", people's communes, "just solution of the contradictions among the people", cultural revolutions—were, up to a certain point, eclectic combinations of the stalinist line with the bukharinist line, because not much was to be invented on this matter.

What maoism brought as new, besides its bold mobilization of the protracted peasants' war in order to overthrow the bourgeoisie, was that it took advantage of a very flexible system of bribing the petty bourgeoisie and even the "patriotic" national bourgeoisie. The social consensus thus obtained (above all because the tiny proletariat was not specially keen on its revolutionary ambitions) was the reason for People's China brief splendor. But as bourgeois reaction was more explosive there than in the Soviet Union, where the capitalist classes had suffered deep blows.

Anyway, however, the moment has come in which the union of interests between the workers, peasants and petty bourgeoisie in general no longer exists. Revolution divided itself into two divergent branches, and the bourgeois branch weakens the proletarian branch, economically feeble than the wide agricultural, commercial, artisan small economy, taking support from the pressure of the world capitalist market.

In this uneven fight, all the conditions are created for the workers' party, limited to democratic reforms and to state capitalism, to delegate the tasks of transformation, administration, and coercion in a vast bureaucracy that rises up as a kind of *arbitrator* in the situation of social impasse and, acting as manager for the national capital, it brings all social forces under its dictatorship.

Transitory regimes were thus born, resulting from the abortion of the revolution when it deviated to state capitalism, ruled by a bureaucracy that gradually changes its nature, while it applies its "socialist" program. Penetrated, bribed by the forces of capital, it is nothing but an incubator of capitalism, and it grows as a new bourgeoisie that finally repudiates its ambitions for planned state capitalism and in the long run discovers its real inclination—the "liberation" of the imprisoned capital.

In search of proletarian hegemony

In your Declaration you stress the need for an "independent political movement of the working class separate from the bourgeois trends and hostile to petty bourgeois conciliationism" [28], you appeal to the workers in order that they "stand at the center of the whole stream of revolts against capitalism and imperialism"[29], and you lay some stress on the growing numbers of workers on a world scale. This is obviously correct but not very substantial and looks a bit like a kind of exorcism, unless the most striking fact of the last half-century is not discussed—the growing petty-bourgeois hegemony over the proletariat.

There are many causes to explain it. Either on account of the new technology, denying the workers' influence on the productive process, making them dependent on technicians, and devaluing their capacities, on the political plain as in their demands; or because there is an uncontrolled increase in the numbers of employed strata of the administration and services, mostly parasitic and therefore fanatic about order; or because, in the developed countries, there is a tendency for the reduction of ruined peasants who, since they had nothing to lose, used to join the revolution; or because the masses of new urban semiproletarians fail to recognize that their interests are on the side of the working class; or because the petty bourgeoisie each time better fulfills their function of political and ideological watchdog for imperialism; or because the modern repressive means and the new means of mass media/mass manipulation generate among the workers the feeling of impotence towards bourgeois order and accelerate a general ideological assimilation—the truth is that the petty-bourgeois consciousness spreads endlessly to the whole society.

A strangulating knot has been created for the march to revolution: in the imperialist centers, objectively ripe for socialism, no revolutionary situations are found, due to the proliferation of unproductive strata, due to the free maneuvering of the reformist political and trade union apparatuses, due to the corruption of part of the proletariat and semiproletariat, bribed by the multinationals, due to the decomposition of ideology and other aspects of social life. But in the dependent countries, reduced to utter destitution by imperialism and shaken by great convulsions, there are also no favorable conditions for proletarian revolution, due to the vitality of bourgeois nationalism there. In both cases, the spirit of the proletarian masses is no longer set on the target of the revolution and proletarian dictatorship and their notion of class identity disappears.

The fact that this drawback exists (even more accentuated after the collapse of the "socialist" camp) led the extreme left groups to the conclusion that they should set more and more *accessible* objectives, in order not to lose contact with the *real* mass movement. However, they have obtained no special gains so far.

Concerning this aspect, we are not convinced about your insistence about the need for closer contact with the daily struggles of the working class, as if it was a compass or charm to find a way out of the present crisis. We know that we are a part of the working class struggle and that we cannot turn our backs on it, or else we degenerate; but we also know that any concession to spontaneism in order to obtain *popularity* is an open door to reformism. What is in the center of proletarian interests is not daily resistance, but rather the need to define the road to revolution, because this is the only way for a real workers' movement.

For a communist program

Why this seeming inevitability of petty-bourgeois hegemony over the proletariat? It is nothing but the inverted image of the real phenomenon: the workers movement has lost sight of revolution and the dictatorship over the bourgeoisie. This is what confines the communists to the role of "unmasking" bourgeois forces, and makes them politically sterile and therefore vulnerable to degeneration.

Naturally, the elaboration of a communist program does not depend on an act of will, it is not an invention of utopias; it is an act of knowledge. It seems to us that the key factor for the proletariat's reorganization as an international revolutionary force is to give it back the theory of revolution, in the light of the experience of this century, especially the Russian revolution.

This means that the answer must be found to many questions that are still open. For example: How to form a close-knit network of organs of class dictatorship (parties, soviets, trade unions, etc.) in order to ensure that they will not be replaced by bureaucratic degeneration? How to ensure such freedom of speech and political organization that they cannot be capitalized by the bourgeoisie? How to ensure workers' control over the factories, dominating the technicians and management, instead of being dominated by them? How to make sure that the functions in the centralized state apparatus shall be gradually transferred to

Reference notes:

[1] The first phrase comes from the second paragraph of *Tasks of workers' communism during the collapse of revisionism*, while the second phrase, a "genuine revolt", does not occur, although *Tasks* does refer two paragraphs later—in a different context—to "mass upheavals in various countries".

[2] In the last paragraph of section B, *Tasks* states that "In one way or another, the origin of most of the present contingents of workers' communism traces back ultimately to past struggles against revisionism, such as the major confrontations with revisionism that took place as part of the upsurge of mass struggle of the 1960's and 70's." (underlining added)

[3] *Röd Gryning*, or *Red Dawn*, is a now-defunct publication which was put out first by the Communist League of Norrköping, and then by its successor, the Marxist-Leninist League of Sweden. The MLL of Sweden has apparently now dissolved, fading away theoretically into trotskyism and in practical work into the left social-democratic Workers' List. In its article *What is state capitalism and why has it arisen?*, it put forward, among

the self-management of the producers? How to continuously implement, from the conquest of power, the suppression of privileges and the elimination of stratification between manual and intellectual workers, leaders and simple toilers? How to combine the widest democracy and a strict workers' and people's legality with inflexible repression over the counter-revolution?

The fact that communism faces questions that were not placed at Marx's and Engels time shows how far we have travelled, even through all the defeats. Only by looking for answers will we be able to raise the unceasing rebellious actions of the masses to a socialist revolutionary level.

We therefore think most important of all is having a communist program that can unify once more all the exploited in the world and prepare them for a new assault on the capitalist fortress, wider and more efficient than the one of 1917. To have such a program, the forces located on the leninist side must collaborate. The publication of an international journal of communist propaganda would be a positive step towards that goal. As for ourselves, we are at your disposal to cooperate in such a task, together with other groups, and are ready to consider any further suggestions for work.

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other things, that "the so-called Marxist-Leninist movement ... must be regarded as one of the various currents within modern revisionism, despite its anti-revisionist slogans and subjective aspirations." This article was reprinted in the May 15, 1990 issue of the *Workers' Advocate Supplement*, and the statement cited is on page 8, column 1. That issue of the *Supplement* also contained a reply to this article. The section "On the revolutionary wave of the past" responded on the issue of the anti-revisionist movement of the past (p. 19).

[4] p. 19, "The revolutionary wave of the past", in the article entitled *We need facts and communist theory, not phrases/Our views on the Swedish article on the method for studying Soviet history*.

[5] This refers to a passage at the end of section D of *Tasks* that states in part "And the PLA has been stagnating and going backward for many years now. We do not have sufficient information to judge where Albanian institutions have already degenerated decisively into capitalism, but the PLA's stagnation has had harmful and dangerous consequences for Albanian politics and economics.

"Thus there are no presently existing models of socialism."

The crisis in Albania of July 1990 to the present has been taken in MLP literature as proof of the rotten nature of the current situation in Albania.

[6] There is no passage that says that Albania should be considered "on principle" a proletarian dictatorship and given "the benefit of the doubt". Nor has MLP literature had any doubt of the abandonment of revolutionary views by the Albanian leadership; instead MLP literature has for years opposed these views.

[7] page 25, col. 2.

[8] The first quote is from the top of col. 1 on page 21, and the second is from the bottom third of col. 1 on page 24.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 24, col. 1, but no specific dates are given in the passage.

[10] *Röd Gryning* had raised the point about running the reformist film backwards. See its article reprinted in May 15, 1990 *Workers' Advocate Supplement*, page 10, col. 1. And it was referred to in the reply to *Röd Gryning* in the June 15, 1990 *Supplement*, page 25, col. 2.

[11] It should be noted that it is the Portuguese comrades, not the MLP, who hold that the line of that time was centrist and not revisionist. For example, consider the line put forward for the international communist movement. A resolution of the Central Committee of MLP, summing up discussion that had been held throughout the entire party, stated that the line of the 7th CI Congress of 1936 should indeed be called revisionist. (See "Down with the revisionism of the 7th CI Congress" in the March 20, 1990 issue of the *Supplement*, pp. 22-3.) For a number of years prior to this, the MLP, without calling this line revisionist, condemned it harshly and called it the backward turn in the international communist movement and a replacement of Leninist views on one issue after another. The entire third issue of the *Supplement*, of May 1, 1985, is devoted to this.

[12] p. 23 bottom of col. 1

[13] It is not clear what passage in the June 15, 1990 issue of the *Supplement* is being referred to.

[14] The MLP's characterizations of the line of the international communist movement depends on what year is being referred to. Note (11), for example, deals with what the MLP has been saying about the line of the 7th Congress of the CI. On the other hand, a very positive overall assessment has been made in MLP literature about the line following the 6th CI Congress, along with certain specific criticisms.

[15] p. 20, col. 1

[16] The MLP literature in the past has talked of accomplishments in the first five year plan as well as the emergence of problems (and also that the MLP is still looking into the matter). It has not referred to this period in Soviet history as a "positive turn" from the previous period.

[17] The words cited here are on p. 21, col. 1. However, in their original context, they do not say that the foundation for socialism had been achieved. The passage

says that:

"The truth is, the Soviet Union, had only reached a further rung in the process of transition to socialism,...

"True, there had been big advances. One can say that a certain foundation had been laid." It then lists several factors, beginning with "Large-scale production had expanded tremendously, ..." (Underlining added)

And it then goes on to talk of "huge problems" including "various problems that had accumulated over this period" and that "the vast social changes unleashed by the five-year plan brought their own social, political, and economic consequences..."

Since then, the MLP has continued to consider how to assess the first five-year plan. But one of the main theoretical points in the articles on socialism in the Jan. 15, 1989 issue of the *Supplement* being referred to, was that industrialization and collectivization do not in themselves constitute Marxist socialism.

[18] p. 20, col. 1.

[19] p. 22, col. 2 in "Discussion following the speech 'The degeneration of Soviet socialism' "

[20] From Stalin's *Concerning Questions of Leninism*, about a third of the way into Section V "The Party and the working class in the system of the dictatorship of the proletariat". This sentence is in the paragraph that begins "Secondly. Not a single important decision is arrived at by the mass organizations of the proletariat without guiding directives from the Party" and ends "Therefore, whoever identifies the leading role of the Party with the dictatorship of the proletariat substitutes the directives given by the Party for the will and actions of the class."

[21] Apparently referring to the article *The State in Revolutionary Periods* by Mansoor Hekmat, which was published in issue no. 2, November 1985, of the theoretical journal of the Communist Party of Iran.

[22] *Workers Advocate Supplement*, June 15, 1990, from a May Day speech, "The collapse of revisionism and the prospects for working class struggle", p. 1, col. 1.

[23] A paraphrase of the sentence in the resolution "Against the anti-socialist crusade of Gorbachev" in the December 1, 1988 *Workers' Advocate*.

[24] A paraphrase of the sentence "Since the mid-1930's, when the Russian leaders revised Marxism-Leninism and turned away from socialism, an upper class of bureaucrats has grown up enriching itself off the sweat of the workers." It is from the statement on the anniversary of the 1917 revolution; p. 11, col. 2

[25] The Portuguese comrades give no reference for this statement.

[26] The quote is from the last paragraph of section G of *Tasks*, while the issue of anarchism and social-democracy is raised in the second paragraph.

[27] See Marx's *Preface to 'A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy'*

[28] From the second paragraph of section C of *Tasks*.

[29] From the third paragraph of section C of *Tasks*. □

