



Volume 1, Number 2
May 1, 1977

the COMMUNIST

*Theoretical Journal of the Central Committee
Of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA*

- **On the Relationship Between the Forces and Relations of Production and the Base and Superstructure**
- **Communism Not Pan Africanism Is the Guide to Socialist Revolution and Black Liberation**
- **Reformist and Revolutionary Views of Capitalist Crisis** A Critique of "New Marxism"
- **Anatomy of a Puerile Leftist Sect**
The Religious Disorder of the Workers Viewpoint Organization
- **Living Socialism and Dead Dogmatism**
The Proletarian Line and the Struggle Against Opportunism on the National Question in the U.S.

\$2

**Published and Distributed by
RCP Publications
P.O. Box 3486 Merchandise Mart
Chicago Illinois 60654**





the COMMUNIST

*Theoretical Journal of the Central Committee
Of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA*

**Volume 1, Number 2
May 1, 1977**

Published and Distributed by
RCP Publications
P.O. Box 3486 Merchandise Mart
Chicago Illinois 60654
Bulk Rates Available
Please Prepay all orders to RCP Publications

© RCP Publications
May 1, 1977

Contents

On the Relationship Between the Forces and Relations of Production and the Base and Superstructure by Owen Natha.....	3
Communism Not Pan Africanism Is the Guide to Socialist Revolution and Black Liberation by John Henry.....	21
Reformist and Revolutionary Views of Capitalist Crisis: A Critique of "New Marxism" by M.F.Z.	47
Anatomy of a Puerile Leftist Sect: The Religious Disorder of the Workers Viewpoint Organization WVO: Undaunted Dogma from Puffed Up Charlatans by Owen Natha.....	73
WVO's Opportunism in Theory and Practice by John B. Tyler.....	88
Living Socialism and Dead Dogmatism The Proletarian Line and the Struggle Against Opportunism on the National Question in the U.S. (Reprinted from <i>Red Papers 6</i> , Published by the Revo- lutionary Union, June 1974).....	110

On the Relationship Between the Forces and Relations of Production And the Base and Superstructure

OWEN NATHA

In every country today, and in all class societies throughout history, the fundamental contradiction is that between the forces of production and the relations of production. This contradiction manifests itself in the struggle between classes, and specifically between the declining class representing relations of production no longer suited to the further development of the productive forces and the rising class that is capable of organizing society on the basis of new relations of production which do conform to and further the development of the productive forces, which liberate these productive forces from the old relations of production.

This is why the *Programme of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA* states that, "The history of society (since classes first developed in ancient times) is the history of class struggle. The continuing development of society from a lower level to a qualitatively higher one has been accomplished throughout history by the overthrow of one class by another which represents a more advanced form of organization of production and society as a whole." (p. 27)

But in this present stage of human history the class struggle and the development of society has reached the point where, for the first time, it is both possible and necessary for the advancement of society and mankind to carry the class struggle through to the complete elimination of classes. This will mean, as Engels explained in *Anti-Duhring*, that the forces of production will be released from the bonds of capitalist production relations, making possible "an unbroken and constantly more rapidly progressing development of the productive forces, and therewith of a practically limitless growth of production itself," and that "Men's own social organization which has hitherto stood in opposition to them, as if arbitrarily decreed by Nature and history, will then become the voluntary act of men themselves." This is communism.

As the experience of modern revolutions has shown, however, between capitalist and communist society is a long transition period, socialism, which is marked not only by the fact that the proletariat holds state power but also by very intense class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. This is because, as the

experience of socialist society has also shown, under socialism itself capitalist relations remain and the bourgeoisie is constantly regenerated and will be during this entire transition period, until the soil for capitalism is completely uprooted, which will require a long period of time. In socialist society, no less than in previous forms of class society, the contradiction between the forces and relations of production remains the fundamental question.

Closely related to this contradiction is the relationship between the economic base and the superstructure of society. These, too, form a contradiction which plays a decisive role in the development of socialist society, no less than in other, previous forms of class society.

The purpose of this article is to examine these two contradictions, in themselves and in their inter-connection, and their relationship to the struggle to advance society from capitalist enslavement to communist emancipation.

In *Anti-Duhring* Engels points out that, "The materialist conception of history starts from the principle that production, and with production the exchange of its products, is the basis of every social order. . ." As Marxist materialism further points out, in carrying out the production and exchange of products men enter into relationship both with nature and with each other. Or, as Stalin summarized it, "Marxism regards social production as an integral whole which has two inseparable sides: the productive forces of society (the relation of society to the forces of nature, in contest with which it secures the material values it needs), and the relations of production (the relations of men to one another in the process of production)." (*Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*, "Concerning the Errors of L.D. Yaroshenko")

The productive forces of society are both the means of production—machinery, raw materials, land, buildings, etc.—and the laboring people who use these means of production.

The relations of production are the property relations, the class relations into which people are organized in the carrying out of production. Most basic in this is the question of relationship to the means of production—that is, generally speaking, the system of ownership (of these means of production). But, with this foundation, the relations of people to each other in the process of production and their relationship to the distribution of the products (which is determined by the system of production and exchange) also form part of the relations of production.

The struggle to develop the productive forces is the most fundamental struggle carried out by mankind in every form of society. As Marx points out, "Men are not free to choose *their productive forces*—which are the basis of all their history—for every productive force is an acquired force, the product of former activity." (*Letter to P. V. Annenkov*, Dec. 28, 1846)

In other words, at each point in its development the people of any society carry out production with what instruments they have at hand, and at the same time strive to improve those instruments and develop new ones, with each generation inheriting what has been developed and continuing this same process. The relations of production, the relations people enter into in carrying out production, ultimately depend on the level of development of the productive forces.

For example, capitalism could not take root until the productive forces had reached the stage where it was possible for masses of people to be freed from bonds that tied them to one piece of land and/or one master and enabled them to sell their ability to work—their labor power—to whatever owner of means of production (capitalist) could put them to work, collectively, to turn out masses of products for sale (commodities). Generally speaking, the full development of capitalism was marked by the invention and introduction in industry of the steam engine and with it the means for mass production—machinery, etc.—carried out by wage workers concentrated in factories (and also the introduction of wage labor and the increasing use of machinery in agriculture.)

Marx summarized the overall relationship between the forces and relations of production—and the base and superstructure—as follows: "Assume a particular state of development in the productive facilities of man and you will get a particular form of commerce and consumption. Assume particular stages of development in production, commerce and consumption and you will have a corresponding social constitution, a corresponding organization of the family, of orders of classes, in a word, a corresponding civil society. Assume a particular civil society and you will get particular political conditions which are only the official expression of civil society." (*Ibid.*)

The economic base of society also consists of two parts: the productive forces and the relations of production. Of these two, the latter are what essentially define the economic base. This is why Marx says that, "In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness." ("Preface" to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*)

That the relations and not the forces of production are what essentially define the economic base can be seen clearly by a comparison between the U.S. and China. In the U.S. the productive forces still are more developed than in China, yet China's economy is socialist—it is a socialist country, where the productive forces

are undergoing vigorous growth, while the U.S. is a capitalist country, in its highest and final stage, imperialism, where the productive forces are overall and fundamentally mired in stagnation, as can be readily seen by the tremendous amount of these productive forces—both people and means of production—which are unused and allowed to rot by the capitalists because they cannot profitably employ them. At the same time, while the relations of production are what essentially define the economic base at any time, these relations of production are ultimately determined by the stage of development of the productive forces—such is the dialectic between the forces and relations of production.

The superstructure of any society consists of the political and legal institutions, the ideas and philosophical systems, etc., which arise on the basis of and reflect the economic base, and particularly the relations of production. For example, capitalism is based on the exploitation of wage labor and all of its institutions and the ideas promoted by the capitalist rulers serve to reenforce these relations of exploitation.

From the above it is obvious that the contradiction between the base and superstructure closely interpenetrates with the contradiction between the forces and relations of production. And this is all the more so because in order to bring about a fundamental change in the economic base, a change in the relations of production that will lead to a qualitative development in the productive forces, it is necessary first of all to bring about fundamental change in the sphere of the superstructure. To put it simply, in order to advance society from one stage to a higher one, characterized by more advanced relations of production corresponding to the further development of the productive forces, it is necessary to make a political revolution—to overthrow the power of the old ruling class, to smash or change the institutions of the old ruling class and create new institutions that reflect and serve the interests of the new ruling class in establishing new, more advanced relations of production. And to do this it is also necessary to carry out struggle in the realm of ideas and culture, against the ideology of the old ruling class.

But what is it that makes it both possible and necessary to carry out such a political revolution? It is precisely that the productive forces have been developed to the point where the old relations of production now stand in antagonistic relationship to them—act as a brake on their further development. As Marx summarizes it, “At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or—what is but a legal expression for the same thing—with the property relations within which they have been at work hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution.”

(“Preface” to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*)

From forms of development into fetters on the productive forces—the relations of production are transformed into their opposite by the very development of the productive forces. These relations of production then become too narrow, too restrictive for the productive forces, which strain against the confines within which these relations hold the productive forces.

This is very vividly demonstrated by the history of capitalist society. It arose on the basis of smashing the feudal order, with its feudal estates and its closed guild system (where separate guilds with their own means of production produced different products), which held back the process of concentrating propertyless proletarians in large factories, exploiting them as wage workers and carrying out “free trade” of commodities to produce and realize profit on the basis of capitalist relations of production and exchange. But with the development of the productive forces under capitalism—which was driven forward by the compulsion of the capitalists to compete with each other—these very capitalist relations of production themselves became too confining; the conflict between them and the productive forces now shackled by them continually bursts into worse and still worse crises, where means of production, labor power and means of consumption all are wasted and destroyed because they cannot be exchanged with each other in a way to increase the profits of the capitalists (for more on this see “Commodities, Capitalism, Class Divisions—and their Abolition with the Achievement of Communism,” *The Communist*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Oct., 1976).

Looking beyond capitalism itself, and summarizing the history of human society as a whole, society develops not in a straight line, not through a simple, quantitative buildup of the productive forces, but through a series of spirals, going from the lower to the higher level. Each spiral, each stage of society, is characterized by the contradiction between the forces and relations of production—as well as between the base and superstructure—manifesting itself in different particular forms according to the particular stage of development. One spiral gives way to the next through a leap, a revolution, which takes place in the sphere of the superstructure and clears the way for qualitative changes in the economic base, for establishing throughout society new relations of production that liberate the productive forces from the shackles of the old productive relations that characterized the old society.

For the proletariat, whose historical mission it is to abolish capitalism and all class distinctions, to achieve communism, it is crucial to correctly understand this question of the relationship between the forces and relations of production and the base and superstructure. This is all the more so because the proletariat cannot carry out its historical mission except by *consciously* grasping and apply-

ing the laws governing the development of society and nature—and the relationship between society and nature.

Previous classes in history, even when they were on the rise, did not and could not master and apply these laws, and the development of the productive forces in previous, lower forms of society was and could be carried out *spontaneously*. But the proletariat, upon seizing political power, faces historically unprecedented tasks.

First, this is because the relations of production the working class must establish do not and cannot arise under capitalism—even though it is true that, as the *Programme* of the RCP states, “the working class . . . in its socialized productive labor, represents the embryonic organization of the future, socialist society.” In contrast, capitalist production relations do develop under feudalism, feudal production relations under slavery, even slave production relations under primitive communal society. Second, the proletariat, in order to achieve communism, is faced with the necessity of sweeping away all the remnants of capitalist society, and class society in general, and organizing and remolding society, including the development of the productive forces as the fundamental aim, according to a *conscious plan* (recognizing, of course, that spontaneity will always play some role because man’s knowledge, even under communism, will always lag somewhat behind the development and transformation of the objective world).

To accomplish this the proletariat must be armed with and apply dialectical—and historical—materialism. It must defeat both idealism and metaphysics—both the failure to grasp the material foundation of society in production and the tendency to deny or distort the reaction of the relations of production on the productive forces and of the superstructure on the economic base.

A clear example of erroneous thinking on this question is the idea that since production is the basis of all society, then the aim of the working class, even under capitalism, is to carry out the struggle for production—to produce more. This completely negates the fact that in order for the productive forces to be liberated and production to continue to develop, capitalism must first be overthrown. Such an erroneous line is obviously a vulgarization of the truth that “people must eat,” or, as Engels put it, “. . . mankind must first of all eat, drink, have shelter and clothing, before it can pursue politics, science, art, religion, etc. . . .” (*Speech at the Grave-side of Karl Marx*)

In short, such a line represents vulgar, or mechanical, materialism as opposed to *dialectical* materialism. It fails to grasp what Engels also wrote, in upholding dialectical materialism in opposition to mechanical materialism, “According to the materialist conception of history, the *ultimately* determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. Hence if somebody

twists this into the statement that the economic element is the *only* determining one, he transforms it into a meaningless, abstract and absurd phrase.” (*Letter to J. Bloch*, Sept. 1890, Engels’ emphasis)

Yet such absurdities, such vulgarizations of materialism, do manifest themselves in the working class movement, not only from the more open spokesmen of the bourgeoisie, but even from so-called “communists.” Historically, in the workers’ movement, one of the main forms this has taken is economism—the tendency that says that the workers are only concerned with and only capable of waging struggle around their immediate conditions of work and their living standard—ignoring the fact that the working class is not only economically exploited but politically oppressed, in many different forms, by the bourgeoisie, and that in the struggle against the bourgeoisie the proletariat can and must forge an alliance, under its leadership, with other classes and groups in society which are also oppressed by the same enemy and also fight back against it. Such a line merges completely with bourgeois trade unionism, which accepts the position of the working class as wage-slaves and at most strives for a better position for the worker within his slavery, for better terms of the sale of his labor power, instead of the abolition of the whole system of wage-slavery with all its evils.

When such a line is presented in “communist” or “socialist” garb, it reduces the question of socialism and communism to simply the development of production and an improvement in the livelihood of the masses. This completely ignores or denies the fact that socialist revolution and the achievement of communism, while having the ultimate aim of liberating the productive forces to constantly develop the material and cultural level of society, requires the transformation of all of society, requires revolution, first to overthrow capitalism and then to eliminate all of its vestiges, all of the relationships and ideas which characterize capitalism and which shackle the productive forces (more on this later).

Such a line obviously negates the dialectical relation between the forces and relations of production and between the base and superstructure. In fact it denies that when the relations of production act as fetters on the productive forces then a change in the relations of production is required and that in order for this to be carried out the superstructure must be transformed—revolution must be carried out in this sphere. At most this line sees only that the productive forces are the *basis* for the relations of production and the economic base the *foundation* for the superstructure, but does not recognize that in turn the relations of production and superstructure *react upon* the productive forces and the economic base; and still less does it recognize that at certain times the relations of production are principal over the productive forces, and the superstructure over the base.

Mao Tsetung summarized this as follows: “True, the productive

forces . . . and the economic base generally play the principal and decisive role; whoever denies this is not a materialist. But it must also be admitted that in certain conditions, such aspects as the relations of production . . . and the superstructure in turn manifest themselves in the principal and decisive role. When it is impossible for the productive forces to develop without a change in the relations of production, then the change in the relations of production plays the principal and decisive role. . . . When the superstructure (politics, culture, etc.) obstructs the development of the economic base, political and cultural changes become principal and decisive. . . . This does not go against materialism; on the contrary, it avoids mechanical materialism and firmly upholds dialectical materialism." (*On Contradiction*)

But there is a line that frequently crops up in the revolutionary movement which does go against materialism—and dialectics, as well—by actually denying the material needs of the masses and the importance of their struggle around these needs. Such a line generally manifests itself in the guise of "ultra-leftism." It pits the struggle of the working class under capitalism for better wages, working conditions, etc., *against* the aim of overthrowing capitalism—instead of grasping the dialectical relationship between them. This line is idealist—and metaphysical—not only in the more crude way that it denies the truth that "man must eat," but also in that it does not recognize that the material needs of the masses are in antagonistic contradiction to the needs of the capitalists to constantly accumulate more profit, that the capitalist system is in the final analysis incapable of bringing about any real and lasting improvement in the living standard of the masses of people, and that this contradiction propels masses of people into struggle against the capitalists—even if, in and of itself, it does not lead to revolutionary consciousness among the masses.

Those who put forward this kind of line are forever talking, and sloganeering, about revolution, but they treat it as an Idea, not based in the material world nor reacting upon it. They fail or refuse to recognize that in the final analysis, as Mao said, "Revolution means liberating the productive forces." They see the task of carrying out revolution in the superstructure and transforming the relations of production as *divorced* from the task of developing the economic base and the productive forces in particular. They fail to see that, overall, the productive forces and the economic base are principal over the relations of production and the superstructure, that in the final analysis it is impossible to advance to communism, to the abolition of classes, without bringing about a tremendous development of the productive forces, and that at each stage in the socialist transition period it is crucial to develop the productive forces in order to continue the advance toward communism (more on this, too, shortly).

Both of these erroneous tendencies—both mechanical materialism and the idealism summarized just above—deviate fundamentally from the correct, Marxist understanding of the relationship between theory and practice, between matter and consciousness. Both are characterized by metaphysics, not dialectics. Both deny—though "from the opposite side"—that matter can be transformed into consciousness and consciousness into matter. Mechanical materialism denies especially the role of ideas, of theory, and the fact that they *can* be transformed into matter, that by grasping and applying correct ideas the masses can transform the material world. The idealism characterized above denies not only that ideas have their origin in the material world, but that they can and *must* be transformed into matter. This idealist tendency treats ideas as though they *are* in themselves matter, that ideas and matter are the same. While the mechanical materialists act as though correct ideas play no role in developing society—"what good is theory, you can't eat or wear it?"—their mirror opposites act as if ideas are a beginning and end in themselves—and as though people can eat and wear theory, and erroneous theory at that!

As stated before, unless the working class, with the leadership of its Party, wages a successful struggle against such opportunist lines it cannot carry out its historical mission. This is a crucial question for the working class in achieving the first great step on the road to its emancipation—the overthrow of capitalism. But it is even more crucial for the working class, once having seized power, in continuing on the socialist road toward the goal of communism.

The experience of socialist countries emphasizes this. The first step in these revolutions, of course, is the seizure of power, in which process the superstructure is obviously principal over the base. And the working class, upon seizing power, faces the task of achieving fundamental transformation of the relations of production, which is then principal over the development of the productive forces. This does not mean that the question of developing the productive forces is unimportant and can be ignored by the victorious proletariat and its Party—if that were to happen, its victory would indeed be short-lived and it would very quickly lose power back to the bourgeoisie, because the proletariat would have proved in practice to be incapable of organizing and developing production and meeting the material needs of the people.

Successful revolutions—and this is all the more so in the case of proletarian revolutions—can only be carried out through armed struggle to overthrow the old regime, and this inevitably means considerable destruction and disruption of the productive forces and the economy. Hence the proletariat, upon winning victory on the battlefield, must pay special and immediate attention to the task of restoring, developing and expanding the economy. This can in turn require some compromise with the "forms and tech-

niques” of capitalism, as Lenin put it. In other words, judging from the experience of socialist revolutions so far, the abolition of bourgeois forms of *ownership* cannot be accomplished in one swoop, but only through a series of stages.

This has proved true, for example, in both Russia and China. And although Russia, and still more China, were backward countries economically at the time of the seizure of power, it is quite probable that even in advanced capitalist countries the same approach of compromise and step-by-step transformation even of the system of ownership will have to be applied to some degree, especially keeping in mind the destruction brought about by the inevitable civil war, which might well occur in the context of, or following shortly after, a larger war, even a world war, as was the case with the Russian and Chinese revolutions.

What all this underscores is that the key question is which class holds state power. But this is not an abstract question, it cannot be treated formalistically, as though which class holds power depends on whether or not the armed forces of the state are called the “red army” (or “people’s army”) and the government is called a “socialist” (or “people’s”) government.

Which class holds power, and whether socialism is being built or capitalism restored, depends fundamentally and at all stages of the revolution, on the question of line. This is why Mao Tsetung stressed that “the correctness or incorrectness of the ideological and political line decides everything.” And this line, in turn, is manifested in concrete policies, which, if they represent the proletariat, further the preservation and consolidation of its rule and its struggle to build socialism and advance toward communism. Under certain conditions—especially at the very early stages of the new society—making use of some of the “forms and techniques” of capitalism, even allowing some sphere of operation to some capitalists, may in fact serve the interests of the proletariat in power; but, this is so only where this is done under the control of the proletarian state and carried out in such a way as to help lay the basis for *moving beyond and eliminating* these capitalist practices and relations as rapidly as possible.

Even where, for a time, capitalist forms of ownership are allowed to continue, this still represents a significant change in the relations of production in society as a whole, because now these forms are restricted and dominated by the proletarian state, which controls credit, trade and the other mainsprings of the economy. These are forms in transition, and even at this stage the economy as a whole is fundamentally different than in capitalist society.

From this it can be seen that what marks the *qualitative leap from capitalism to socialism* is, first of all the seizure of power by the working class (and its allies) and on this basis the first basic steps in transforming the relations of production. Such a qualita-

tive leap can never be achieved through the mere development of the productive forces.

The line that the key factor in advancing to socialism is the level of development of the productive forces is the “theory of the productive forces.” This line, which is plainly based on mechanical materialism, says that only where the productive forces are highly developed already—that is, under capitalism—can socialism be built and, on the other hand, that the development of the productive forces will automatically—at some future point, of course!—lead to socialism. (Where capitalism has already been overthrown and socialist society exists, this “productive forces” line takes a somewhat different form; more on that later.)

Lenin scathingly exposed this “productive forces” line, especially in answering Kautsky and other renegades in the Second International who: during WW1 went over to the side of their own bourgeoisie and aligned themselves against proletarian revolution. These opportunists declared that socialist revolution was doomed to failure in the newly formed Soviet Republic, because it was an economically backward country. Lenin posed and answered the question this way:

“If a definite level of culture [here culture means especially technology and technological know-how—O.N.] is required for the building of socialism (although nobody can say just what that definite ‘level of culture’ is, for it differs in every West European country), why cannot we begin by first achieving the prerequisites for that definite level of culture in a revolutionary way, and *then*, with the aid of the workers’ and peasants’ government and the Soviet system, proceed to overtake the other nations?” Lenin continued, “You say that civilisation is necessary for the building of socialism. Very good. But why could we not first create such prerequisites of civilisation in our country as the expulsion of the landowners and the Russian capitalists, and then start moving towards socialism? Where, in what books, have you read that such variations of the customary historical sequence of events are impermissible or impossible?”

Lenin even foresaw the possibility that in colonial countries the advance to socialism could be made, even starting with a more backward economic foundation: “Our European philistines never even dream that the subsequent revolutions in Oriental countries, which possess much vaster populations and a much vaster diversity of social conditions, will undoubtedly display even greater distinctions than the Russian revolution.” (See “Our Revolution,” Jan., 1923, Vol. 33, pp. 478-80)

Examining in more depth these statements by Lenin will help to gain a firmer grasp of the question of the relationship between the forces and relations of production, and the base and superstructure, and to understand more clearly the “left” and right deviations from

Marxism on these fundamental questions. Lenin argues that seizing power in the superstructure is the first decisive step—"achieving the prerequisites for that definite level of culture in a revolutionary way." And he points out that transforming the relations of production, beginning with the system of ownership, also opens the way to developing the productive forces—"first create such prerequisites of civilization in our country as the expulsion of the landowners and the Russian capitalists. . ."

But Lenin nowhere denies or downplays the importance of developing the productive forces. Just the opposite—he recognizes that developing the productive forces is indeed absolutely necessary in order to build socialism and that the advance toward communism does require that the productive forces be developed beyond that in capitalist society—" . . . with the aid of the workers' and peasants' government and the Soviet system, proceed to overtake the other [i.e., capitalist—O.N.] nations."

In leading the Soviet masses in socialist revolution and socialist construction, Lenin, and after him Stalin, waged sharp struggle not only against the "productive forces" line but also against "ultra-left" lines that either openly said that it was not necessary to devote any serious attention and work to developing the economy or would have had the effect of sabotaging this task. This is graphically shown in Lenin's speeches in late 1920—early 1921 on his differences with Trotsky and Bukharin—top Party leaders in the Soviet Union at that time.

In these polemics Lenin argued that, "Politics must take precedence over economics. To argue otherwise is to forget the ABC of Marxism." In other words, the question of what line leads is fundamental, and "without a correct political approach to the matter the given class will be unable to stay on top, and, consequently, will be incapable of solving *its production problem* either."

But, at the same time, Lenin stressed that solving production problems was especially crucial then, and he ripped the mask off Trotsky and Bukharin's claims that they were concerned with the developing the economy and had a correct plan for doing so. Lenin showed that in fact they continued to raise erroneous political lines. (Trotsky called for the "militarization" of the trade unions, a policy of coercion to force workers to produce, rather than unleashing their productive power on the basis of raising and relying on their political consciousness and applying correct politics to concretely organize and develop production. At the same time—in typically opportunist fashion—Trotsky supported Bukharin in championing the phony slogan of "industrial democracy," which raised the category of democracy above classes—above the need of the proletariat to rule and to develop production in order to maintain and consolidate its rule—and would have led to anarchy in the economy and society. Bukharin, in addition to raising this particular reac-

tionary slogan, tried in general to openly separate politics from economics.)

Lenin pointed out that Trotsky and Bukharin forced the Party to bog itself down in struggle against their erroneous "abstract theoretical propositions," at a time when "no theory is half so important as practice"—specifically practice in developing the economy; political struggle, Lenin said, should then be focused on this question. In these circumstances, especially right after the civil war, Lenin argued that "production work is more interesting than the rectifying of minute theoretical disagreements." (See "The Trade Unions, The Present Situation and Trotsky's Mistakes," and "Once Again on the Trade Unions, the Current Situation and the Mistakes of Trotsky and Bukharin," Vol. 32, pp. 19-42 and 70-107)

After Lenin's death Stalin continued the struggle against the opportunist lines of Trotsky and Bukharin which came to a head in the mid and later 1920s. First Stalin led the struggle against Trotsky's "ultra-left" line of squeezing, even forcibly expropriating the peasants—especially the middle peasants—as the only method for accumulating funds, accelerating industrial growth and developing the economy. In fact such a line, had it been carried out, would have undermined the foundation of the economy, heightened the contradiction between town and country and agriculture and industry, driven masses of peasants into the arms of the overthrown landlords and bourgeoisie and wrecked the worker-peasant alliance, the basis of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the Soviet Union. In short, Trotsky wanted to introduce a change in the relations of production—collectivization—at a time when this was not yet possible—and in a way that would ruin the actual preparation for such a step.

Then, again under Stalin's leadership, the struggle was focused against Bukharin's openly rightist line of giving full sway to capitalism, particularly in the countryside. Bukharin said that capitalism would "grow into" socialism peacefully, without class struggle—without the struggle to achieve collectivization, step-by-step—in the countryside especially. While Trotsky's line amounted to all struggle and no unity with the middle peasants, Bukharin's was all unity and no struggle, and would have had the same effect of undermining the development of the socialist economy, specifically the relationship between industry and agriculture, and wrecking the revolutionary alliance between the workers and the peasants.

Both Trotsky and Bukharin's line were rightist in essence. Both actually led away from the concrete task of building socialism in the Soviet Union, and both would have led—though "from opposite directions"—to a wrecking of socialism and the restoration of capitalism.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine all the struggles that took place in the Soviet Union during the period of proletarian

rule and the construction of socialism—from the revolution of October, 1917 to the mid-'50s—and the struggles that have taken place in China and other socialist countries down to today. But some main lessons can be summed up from the experience of socialist countries, specifically around the question of the relationship between the forces and relations of production and the base and superstructure.

While socialism is itself a long transition period, an entire stage between capitalist and communist society, within the socialist stage there are in turn different stages. Each of these stages is marked by particular contradictions, which are rooted in the overall relationship between the forces and relations of production and the base and superstructure, and are the particular forms that these contradictions are manifesting themselves in at the particular stage.

As with the development of all things, all contradictions, there is a quantitative buildup, quantitative changes within the particular stages, due to the development of the particular contradictions marking the particular stages. And at a certain point there is a qualitative leap from one stage to the next.

Summing this up in a general way, while keeping in mind that each stage has its own particularities, what makes possible and marks these leaps are qualitative changes in the relations of production (higher forms of socialist relations, further restricting of capitalist relations) and in the superstructure (strengthening of the proletarian dictatorship, proletarian culture and ideology, etc.). This is true in regard to these stages, or spirals, within the overall socialist stage, just as the big leap from the capitalist to the socialist stage—and ultimately from the socialist to the communist stage of society—is made possible and characterized by a big leap in the relations of production and the superstructure.

An outstanding example of this is the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, which raged throughout China on a mass scale for several years in the late 1960s. This was a battle by the proletariat to seize portions of power usurped by the bourgeoisie, and specifically by a bourgeois headquarters within the Communist Party itself, which dominated many spheres of socialist society—the educational system, culture, much of the planning and implementation of economic policy, and so on. Through this struggle the proletariat not only seized back many of these positions but made new breakthroughs, revolutionary transformations in the sphere of the superstructure—culture, education, etc.—and in the relations of production—developing teams of workers, officials and technicians to make technological advances while taking part in productive labor; sending educated youth to the countryside and to factories to work and combining study at school with productive labor (this was based on revolutionizing the educational system); replacing one-man management with leadership in the factories by a group

composed of representatives of the workers themselves, Party members and office personnel; putting proletarian politics, producing for the good of society and the world revolution, in place of profit and material incentives in command of production; and a number of other sweeping changes which narrowed the “three great differences” (between mental and manual labor, town and country and workers and peasants) as well as restricting actual inequality in the shape of formal equality (“bourgeois right,” such as equal pay for equal work, equal exchange of commodities of equal value, etc.—see “Bourgeois Right, Economism, and the Goal of the Working Class Struggle,” *The Communist*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Oct., 1976).

But the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution did not and could not represent a leap to communism, to the end of classes and the elimination of all remnants of capitalism. As Mao Tsetung summed up, the Cultural Revolution was “absolutely necessary and most timely for consolidating the dictatorship of the proletariat, preventing capitalist restoration and building socialism,” but “the present Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution is only the first; there will inevitably be many more in the future.” On the other hand, Mao recognized that the kind of large-scale mass upheaval that characterized the Cultural Revolution in the late '60s cannot be carried out all the time, but only after the class struggle, and the struggle for production (and scientific experimentation) has developed to the point where another leap, still within the overall stage of socialism, is both possible and necessary for continuing the march toward communism.

These qualitative leaps, marked by changes in the relations of production and in the superstructure, could not take place if during the whole of each particular stage advances were not made in developing the productive forces and the economic base. In short, at all times under socialism, the proletariat must devote every effort to developing the productive forces and the economy as well as to waging the class struggle against the bourgeoisie, and these two aspects are inter-related.

As the productive forces develop, the step-by-step creation by the working class of new, more advanced relations of production becomes possible. The old relations of production become fetters on the further development of the productive forces, and the question of the old versus the new relations becomes the focus of sharp struggle. Much of this struggle is nonantagonistic, among the people, over what is right and wrong. But this question also becomes a battleground of antagonistic class struggle.

Mao Tsetung has summed up the relationship between the class struggle and the development of the productive forces, between politics and economics, in the slogan, “grasp revolution, promote production.” How does the proletariat correctly grasp and apply this principle of materialist dialectics in the actual struggle to build

socialism and advance to communism?

With each new stage—within the general stage of socialism—the proletariat captures new positions, makes new advances in the relations of production and in the realm of the superstructure, progresses further toward communism. But at the same time the bourgeoisie continues to exist and capitalist forces are constantly regenerated during each stage of socialism. The proletariat, having captured these new positions, must wage struggle to defend them and in the same process lay the basis for making a new leap in the future. The bourgeoisie, on its part, will attempt to hack away at these gains, capture back positions it has lost and prepare for reversing the entire process of socialist revolution in order to restore capitalism. It is in this way that the class struggle takes shape and that the proletariat, if it is armed with and carries out the correct line, can continue to advance from one stage to another during the entire period of socialism and finally achieve communism. Mao Tsetung also summed this up in the formulation that “class struggle is the key link.”

As indicated before, this struggle does not take place in the abstract; the question of which class will win out is concentrated in concrete struggles over lines and policies in every part of society. If, for example, a bourgeois line leads in a particular factory then the actual relations of production there will not be socialist but capitalist. This will manifest itself in such policies as profit in command, reliance on managers and experts, “material incentives”—piece-work, bonuses, etc.—and in competition between the workers. It will mean that the utilization of the means of production, and the organization of labor, in the plant will not be based on the principle of putting the needs of society—and ultimately the world revolution—first, but on the basis of what will be most “efficient” to bring profit to the individual plant, and its managers. If this is allowed to go on it will mean speedup and sooner or later even layoffs and unemployment for the workers.

Relations between plants guided by this bourgeois line will also not be based on socialist principles but on the principles of capitalist competition—for means of production, labor power, a market for the products of the factory, etc. If this same line leads in determining policy on the relation between industry and agriculture, the latter, already at a lower stage of development, will suffer; the operation of the law of value will not be restricted and the “scissors” effect, typical of capitalism will prevail—where agricultural producers are caught between the high price of industrial goods needed for agriculture and the low price paid for the output of agriculture. Clearly such a line will lead to the destruction of socialism, and a reversion back to capitalism.

The proletariat must fight at each stage for the greatest possible restriction of capitalist relations—restriction of the operation of

the law of value, of the “three great differences” and of bourgeois right. But the degree to which these can be restricted is dialectically related to the development of the productive forces and the economy.

To take just one example, the contradiction between mental and manual labor cannot be restricted—and eventually eliminated—unless the labor productivity of society is raised, so that workers can reproduce their own labor power and the means of production on an extended scale in an increasingly shorter period of time, freeing them to spend more time in study, both of Marxist theory and of science and technology, and in taking part in political struggle and administration of society as a whole. On the other hand, raising labor productivity cannot be based—as it is under capitalism—on intensifying the work of the workers. It must and can only be based on organizing and making breakthroughs in production to develop the productive forces, and fundamentally on revolutionizing the relations of production to increasingly free them from the fetters of capitalist relations—for example, to cite one important aspect, to free the workers to make technical breakthroughs to help raise labor productivity, which they cannot and will not do if capitalist principles and their consequences hold sway.

As can be seen, the correct handling of the relationship between politics and economics, between the forces and relations of production and the base and superstructure, requires the conscious application of scientific principles, of materialist dialectics. And this is all the more so since socialist revolution and socialist construction can only be carried out by the masses of people and not by any small handful nor even by the Party of the proletariat alone.

This means that the contradiction between the objective and subjective factors must be handled well, for as Mao has pointed out, it is often the case that objectively the masses need a certain change, objectively the conditions exist for making such a change, but the masses are not yet willing and determined to make this change and must be convinced of the need to do so. Only the correct application of the mass line can resolve this contradiction, and this applies to such questions as restricting the operation of commodity production and the law of value, restricting bourgeois right, the three major differences, etc. This emphasizes, again, that the correct ideological and political line is decisive for resolving step-by-step the contradictions that exist, in all their different forms and different stages of development, throughout the entire transition from capitalism to communism.

Guided by the universal principles of materialist dialectics, in opposition to idealism and metaphysics, the proletariat, led by its Party, can forge and wield the correct line and policies not only to overthrow capitalism but to carry out socialist revolution and socialist construction under the dictatorship of the proletariat—and

in particular to correctly handle the relationship between the forces and relations of production and the base and superstructure. In this way the proletariat can, in accordance with the spiral development of socialism, advance through successive stages to the historic goal of communism.

Communism Not Pan Africanism Is the Guide to Socialist Revolution and Black Liberation

JOHN HENRY

One of the key questions facing the proletariat in the U.S. is the Afro-American National Question.* Therefore communists must have a proletarian analysis of every major movement and ideological trend that develops or continues to exist among Afro-Americans in order to unite with what is revolutionary, combat what is reactionary, and win over the uncommitted. The building of the united front against U.S. imperialism among the broad masses of the American people, including Afro-Americans, is a strategic task that requires consistent analysis of class forces and a correct approach to building unity in struggle.

An important political phenomenon in the struggles of Afro-American people is Pan Africanism. In essence, Pan Africanism serves to limit the revolutionary potential of the spontaneous Afro-American people's movement by distracting attention away from the material reality of the national oppression and class exploitation suffered by the masses of Afro-American people. But in the midst of the current economic and political crisis of U.S. imperialism Pan Africanism is not a vital day-to-day concern of the masses.

However, the existence of Afro-American nationalism, petty bourgeois class tendencies, the existence of the Black nation, racism (white chauvinism), and the intensity of the African revolution, set the stage on which Pan Africanism among Afro-American people could grow. Therefore, in this period there is significant potential for this petty bourgeois trend to influence and divert the struggle for fundamental change. Pan Africanism must be understood and fought in order to serve the real interests of the masses in revolutionary struggle.

As Lenin clearly pointed out:

“The consciousness of the working masses cannot be genuine

* In this article the term Afro-American is frequently used, especially to indicate that Black people in the U.S., while they have roots in Africa, are a distinct people and not part of an “African nation” allegedly composed of black people in all parts of the world. In the context of dealing with Pan Africanism it is important to make this distinction, since the term “Black people” is often used by the Pan Africanists to push such an “African nation” line.

class-consciousness, unless the workers learn, from concrete and above all from topical, political facts and events to observe every other social class in all the manifestations of its intellectual, ethical, and political life; unless they learn to apply in practice the materialist analysis and the materialist estimate of all aspects of the life and activity of all classes, strata, and groups of the population." (Lenin, *What is to be Done?*, Chapter IIIC, Vol. 5, p. 412)

The essence of Pan Africanism is bourgeois ideology. As a fully developed political line, it is reformist at best, and in one way or another serves the interests of imperialism. Therefore, with regard to the revolutionary potential of the Afro-American people's struggle, Pan Africanism must be totally defeated in order to consolidate the ideological hegemony of the working class, to firmly merge the struggle of the Afro-American people with the proletariat's struggle to overthrow the capitalist order in the U.S.A. and build socialism.

On the other hand, many militant fighters will emerge in the heat of struggle against oppression who are under the influence of some variety of Pan Africanism but are not firmly consolidated to it. At this stage of our movement, and certainly for a long time to come, this will be a common experience because of the ideological hegemony exerted by the imperialists. Therefore we must approach this type of situation with an active application of materialist dialectics and struggle to win these honest elements to a revolutionary line. In short, we must avoid "left" and right errors—either killing the patient while trying to cure the illness or catching the illness while trying to unite with the patient. Our task is to cure the illness and save the patient.

In general, it is only a small few who are hard-core Pan Africanists (like Stokely Carmichael and his All-African People's Revolutionary Party) while the majority of people are honestly searching for a correct line. Therefore, with the common basis of interest between the vast majority of the Afro-American masses and the proletariat in the U.S., the general interest in Pan Africanism must be regarded as a contradiction among the people and not as an antagonistic contradiction between enemies. This must be handled in a special way as pointed out by Mao Tsetung:

"The only way to settle questions of an ideological nature or controversial issues among the people is by the democratic method, the method of discussion, of criticism, of persuasion and education, and not by the method of coercion or repression. . . . This democratic method of resolving contradictions among the people was epitomized in 1942 in the formula 'unity, criticism, unity.' To elaborate, it means starting from the desire for unity, resolving contradictions through criticism or strug-

gle, and arriving at a new unity on a new basis" (Mao Tsetung, *Selected Readings*, pp. 43-439)

In order to do this with the Pan Africanist tendency of some Afro-American people, as an important part of building the united front against imperialism among the broad masses of people, it is necessary to discuss three basic questions:

- (1) What is the origin and historical development of Pan Africanism?
- (2) Why does contemporary Pan Africanism represent bourgeois ideology?
- (3) What are the current political consequences of Pan Africanism in the U.S. today?

BACK-TO-AFRICA SCHEMES VS. SUPPORT FOR AFRICAN LIBERATION

Pan Africanism has two tendencies which have emerged and both must be understood historically in order to sort out the class forces involved, and to determine its political character. The first major trend focused on emigration. There were various schemes to relocate Black people some places outside of the United States, usually in Africa.

The desire to emigrate to Africa has never been the main trend among Afro-Americans. This trend has always been a struggle to survive and resist oppression within the U.S.A. But it is necessary to examine this secondary aspect, because it can become the main trend under certain conditions if not handled correctly. Indeed, it became a major force with the "Back to Africa" Garvey movement from 1920 to 1930.

Under the propulsion of the newly developing capitalist system the Atlantic slave trade became a fundamental source of capital accumulation that financed their industrial revolution. This, along with the dispossession of small farmers and other petty producers and their exploitation as wage laborers, transformed the American economy from a colonial economy based largely on commerce into an advancing capitalist economy based on industrial production. The main wave of the slave trade lasted from 1701 to 1810. Estimates range from 10 million slaves to the 100 million by W. E. B. DuBois. The main point is that Africans were being imported legally as slaves until 1808 (and then illegally smuggled through 1870). But after 1808 the main source of slave labor was domestic, natural population growth and the transfer of 35% of the slave population from border states to the lower South between 1820 and 1860. No the slave population developed in two stages, the first period being the active use of African labor, the second being the use of the offspring of this African labor. Of course, this is a fundamen-

class-consciousness, unless the workers learn, from concrete and above all from topical, political facts and events to observe every other social class in all the manifestations of its intellectual, ethical, and political life; unless they learn to apply in practice the materialist analysis and the materialist estimate of all aspects of the life and activity of all classes, strata, and groups of the population." (Lenin, *What is to be Done?*, Chapter IIIC, Vol. 5, p. 412)

The essence of Pan Africanism is bourgeois ideology. As a fully developed political line, it is reformist at best, and in one way or another serves the interests of imperialism. Therefore, with regard to the revolutionary potential of the Afro-American people's struggle, Pan Africanism must be totally defeated in order to consolidate the ideological hegemony of the working class, to firmly merge the struggle of the Afro-American people with the proletariat's struggle to overthrow the capitalist order in the U.S.A. and build socialism.

On the other hand, many militant fighters will emerge in the heat of struggle against oppression who are under the influence of some variety of Pan Africanism but are not firmly consolidated to it. At this stage of our movement, and certainly for a long time to come, this will be a common experience because of the ideological hegemony exerted by the imperialists. Therefore we must approach this type of situation with an active application of materialist dialectics and struggle to win these honest elements to a revolutionary line. In short, we must avoid "left" and right errors—either killing the patient while trying to cure the illness or catching the illness while trying to unite with the patient. Our task is to cure the illness and save the patient.

In general, it is only a small few who are hard-core Pan Africanists (like Stokely Carmichael and his All-African People's Revolutionary Party) while the majority of people are honestly searching for a correct line. Therefore, with the common basis of interest between the vast majority of the Afro-American masses and the proletariat in the U.S., the general interest in Pan Africanism must be regarded as a contradiction among the people and not as an antagonistic contradiction between enemies. This must be handled in a special way as pointed out by Mao Tsetung:

"The only way to settle questions of an ideological nature or controversial issues among the people is by the democratic method, the method of discussion, of criticism, of persuasion and education, and not by the method of coercion or repression. . . . This democratic method of resolving contradictions among the people was epitomized in 1942 in the formula 'unity, criticism, unity.' To elaborate, it means starting from the desire for unity, resolving contradictions through criticism or strug-

gle, and arriving at a new unity on a new basis." (Mao Tsetung, *Selected Readings*, pp. 438-439)

In order to do this with the Pan Africanist tendency of some Afro-American people, as an important part of building the united front against imperialism among the broad masses of people, it is necessary to discuss three basic questions:

- (1) What is the origin and historical development of Pan Africanism?
- (2) Why does contemporary Pan Africanism represent bourgeois ideology?
- (3) What are the current political consequences of Pan Africanism in the U.S. today?

BACK-TO-AFRICA SCHEMES VS. SUPPORT FOR AFRICAN LIBERATION

Pan Africanism has two tendencies which have emerged and both must be understood historically in order to sort out the class forces involved, and to determine its political character. The first major trend focused on emigration. There were various schemes to relocate Black people some place outside of the United States, usually in Africa.

The desire to emigrate to Africa has *never* been the *main* trend among Afro-Americans. The main trend has always been a struggle to survive and resist oppression within the U.S.A. But it is necessary to examine this secondary aspect, because it can become the main trend under certain conditions if not handled correctly. Indeed, it became a major force with the "Back to Africa" Garvey movement from 1920 to 1923.

Under the propulsion of a newly developing capitalist system the Atlantic slave trade became a fundamental source of capital accumulation that financed the industrial revolution. This, along with the dispossession of small farmers and other petty producers and their exploitation as workers, transformed the American economy from a colonial economy based largely on commerce into an advancing capitalist economy based on industrial production. The main wave of the slave trade lasted from 1701 to 1810. Estimates range from 10 million slaves up to the 100 million by W. E. B. DuBois. The main point is that Africans were being imported legally as slaves until 1808 (and then illegally smuggled through 1870). But after 1808 the main source of slave labor was domestic, natural population growth and the transfer of 35% of the slave population from border states to the lower South between 1820 and 1860. So the slave population developed in two stages, the first period being the active use of African labor, the second being the use of the offspring of this African labor. Of course, this is a fundamen-

tal aspect of how Africans were transformed into Afro-Americans over a 200 year period.

Some, from among both of these types of slaves, and those that had achieved freedom, made emigrationist efforts. The most famous case of successful resistance during the slave trade occurred on board the slave ship *Amistad* off the coast of Cuba. In 1839, the slaves on this ship, led by Cinque, seized the ship and attempted to navigate it back to Africa. After two months they ended up in Long Island, and continued to fight for their freedom in the courts. Their case, supported by the abolitionist John Quincy Adams, was argued before the Supreme Court and won in 1841. This was obviously a just fight to escape the brutal condition of slavery and return "home."

But even earlier than this the emigrationist movement had taken on many organizational forms, mostly in centers of abolitionism. Some Black free men and women expressed a desire to escape from the dangers of slavery and "establish a homeland" in Africa or somewhere else. The main expectation for this new homeland was that the bourgeois democratic promise of America, an illusion for most whites and openly denied to Blacks, would be achievable in Africa for Black people. This sentiment was expressed by a prospective emigrant in an 1818 letter from Illinois:

"I am a free man of colour, have a family and a large connection of free people of colour residing on the Wabash, who are all willing to leave America whenever the way shall be opened. We love this country and its liberties, if we could share an equal right in them; but our freedom is partial, and we have no hope that it ever will be otherwise here; therefore we had rather be gone, though we should suffer hunger and nakedness for years. Your honour may be assured that nothing shall be lacking on our part in complying with whatever provision shall be made by the United States, whether it be to go to Africa or some other place; we shall hold ourselves in readiness, praying that God (who made man free in the beginning, and who by His kind providence has broken the yoke from every white American) would inspire the heart of every true son of liberty with zeal and pity, to open the door of freedom for us also.

I am, etc.
Abraham Camp"

Within the specific historical condition of slavery in the U.S.A. this was a just and legitimate position.

But Black people were not the only source of support for emigration to Africa. In 1816, the American Colonization Society was formed by Abolitionists who held that one possible solution to the problem of slavery was the repatriation of Afro-American peo-

ple to Africa. This was rationalized as a process to bring civilization and Christianity to the backward primitive condition of blacks in Africa. But the real intent was stated by the reactionary Henry Clay of Kentucky: "to rid our country of a useless and pernicious, if not dangerous portion of its population."

The prospect of slaves being "useless" was raised by the decline in slave-based agricultural production in the border states (though slave-trading continued on a considerable scale there) and by the rise of capitalist production in the Northern states. The prospect of slaves being "dangerous" was sharply raised after the slave revolt in Virginia led by Gabriel Prosser in 1800, and this was added to by the "danger" represented by a number of free Blacks in the country, many of whom used their freedmen status to help organize against slavery. Several states passed laws supporting and funding colonization schemes.

The class essence of this program was to serve the interests of a rising capitalist class which had just completed establishing American independence from England in the War of 1812. Colonization efforts were intended to eliminate slavery as a backward fetter on industrial capitalism emerging in the North, to drain away a source of weakness for the slavocracy of the South (e.g., the slave rebellions), and to establish a beachhead in Africa for U.S. capitalist interests.

But these were not reasons that were shared by Black abolitionists. While sometimes using the resources of the Colonization Society to accomplish similar ends, they refused to accept the dictates of a "benevolent capitalist class" and struggled to maintain an independent approach to emigrationism. They drew a sharp distinction between deportation and emigration.

Through the 1800s these were more than theoretical discussions. The British counterpart to the American Colonization Society had set up the colony of Sierre Leone in 1787 by resettling 400 Africans who were freed from ships illegally trading in slaves. These settlers were joined by 1100 Black people in 1792 from Nova Scotia, and 38 in 1815, under the leadership of a Black, petty-capitalist Boston sail maker, Paul Cuffee. The American Colonization Society arranged for some former slaves to emigrate to what is now Liberia in 1822. Liberia formally became a country in 1847 and, since the Civil War period, has been a neo-colony of the U.S.

The Liberian case is important for understanding Pan Africanism in the U.S.A., because it demonstrates the futility of emigrationist schemes. Most people who went there either died, or became part of a Liberian aristocracy ("Americo-Liberians") who, in turn, forced the indigenous population into virtual slavery. On the other hand, the efforts by the U.S. ruling class, through state governments and the American Colonization Society, were reactionary because they often forced people to choose between slavery and emigration.

Their efforts were not in the interest of Blacks or the working class in the U.S., and certainly not in the interests of the people of Liberia. This is a necessary distinction because it involves the difference between the oppressor and the oppressed.

When we turn to the consequences of these emigrationist efforts we also find a similar distinction between results that further oppressed the African masses and those that were generally progressive—many who emigrated helped establish schools and social services for the African masses, and spoke out for self-rule in opposition to colonialism. In this respect, these emigrationist efforts were positive though a variety of factors led to failure. And further, the colonies of Sierre Leone and Liberia prove that colonization eventually worked in the interests of the rising capitalist classes of Britain and the United States.

All of this pre-Civil War emigrationism culminated in the National Negro Convention movement. Free Black leadership began to meet to debate alternative programs to protect the interests of Black people. By the 1850s there was considerable interest in emigration, if not to Africa, then to Canada, the West Indies, Mexico or South America. This increased support among some segments of Black people was a clear response to the growing power of the slavocracy in national politics, the rapid deterioration of the political status of free Blacks in the North, and especially the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, which legitimized hunting down escaped slaves even in states where slavery was outlawed, as well as threatening all free Blacks. Even Abraham Lincoln got into the act and proposed to “save the Union” by the wholesale deportation of Black people.

Again, the main trend was different: David Walker, Henry Highland Garnett and Frederick Douglass all symbolized the militant resistance by Blacks to the conditions of slavery in the U.S. The runaway slaves, led by such fighters as Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth, headed North to freedom and not back to Africa.

After the Civil War, the conditions faced by Black people were determined by the laws governing the socio-economic development of a U.S. dominated by advancing capitalist relations. This period represents the forging of an Afro-American people into a nation under conditions of semi-feudal production relations and, even though the political repression of Black people was intensified to murderous proportions, the Civil War broke the fetter of slavery. From that time on it was only by resolving the contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie through socialist revolution that the other contradictions in U.S. society, including the oppression of Black people, could be fully resolved—although the fight for democracy for Black people in the fullest sense, for equality, has been and remains a key question and a critical component part of the struggle for socialist revolution.

The Afro-American people were now faced with different options than under slavery. Previously, the fight against slavery was a revolutionary fight for bourgeois democracy, while the option to return to Africa was a just and legitimate, though secondary, demand. Now, as a distinct nation of people, in the situation where socialist revolution was on the historical agenda, all political demands had to be weighed in relation to the overall tasks of the proletariat as well as the democratic rights belonging to a nation.

The source of struggle during this period was a land-based peasant class (sharecroppers and tenant farmers of several types) led by petty bourgeois elites seeking an alternative to the brutal repression of the post-Reconstruction period. The capitalist class used the post-Civil War Reconstruction period from 1865-1877 to consolidate its overall economic and political rule, and then made a deal—the Hayes-Tilden compromise—to relinquish political power in the South back to the former plantation-based slavocracy. The Union troops pulled out of the South in 1877, and in 1878 about 300 Black people fled South Carolina to Liberia under the organization of the Liberian Exodus Company with the help of Martin Delaney. Delaney was a physician who had gone to Harvard, fought as a major in the Civil War, and then worked in the Reconstruction bureaucracy.

The struggle of the Afro-American people must be understood within the broad context of U.S. history and world events, especially two world-historic developments:

(1) Capitalism developed into the world system of imperialism, and with this the imperialist powers dominated every major part of the globe, including Africa. Lenin makes this clear:

“To the numerous ‘old’ motives of colonial policy, finance capital has added the struggle for the sources of raw materials, for the export of capital, for ‘spheres of influence,’ i.e., for spheres for profitable deals, concessions, monopolist profits and so on, and finally, for economic territory in general. When the colonies of the European powers in Africa, for instance, comprised only one-tenth of that territory (as was the case in 1876), colonial policy was able to develop by methods other than those of monopoly—by the ‘free grabbing’ of territories, so to speak. But when nine-tenths of Africa had been seized (by 1900), when the whole world had been divided up, there was inevitably ushered in the era of monopoly possession of colonies and, consequently, of particularly intense struggle for the division and the redivision of the world.” (*Imperialism*, FLP, Peking, pp. 149-150)

It is quite clear, therefore, that with the rise of imperialism the key determining political factor for any Africa-oriented activity was whether it supported or opposed imperialism. It is also impor-

tant to point out that the African peoples mounted resistance to imperialist domination within the colonial context.

(2) The second major world development was the first proletarian socialist revolution. The 1917 Russian revolution ushered in a new period of history, and redefined the struggles of colonial peoples. No longer was the most advanced front that of bourgeois democracy (the bourgeois-democratic countries themselves turned moribund with the rise of imperialism), but now the suffering masses of the world could draw inspiration and support from the world's first socialist state and could fight, on a world scale, as part of the proletarian-socialist revolution, directing their own struggle, through stages, toward the goal of socialism. The Bolshevik-led Soviet Union was leading the way for the masses of the world.

It is in this context that we can continue the discussion of the Pan Africanist tendency of emigrationism. The final example is the only emigrationist movement that became a dominant mass movement among Afro-American people. Marcus Garvey (1887-1940) was the leader of this movement. Born in Jamaica, he established the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and enlisted the organizational participation and support of over a million Black people. His base was mainly among the landless peasants who migrated to Northern cities during the First World War (1916-1918).

Garveyism is a good historical case to study because it has direct relevance to understanding an emigrationist Pan Africanist line today. It arose and gained a base among Afro-Americans in the conditions following World War 1. The mass migration of Blacks from the rural areas of the South to the Northern industrial cities accelerated their proletarianization. But they were forced into the worst jobs and many were unemployed. They were sometimes used by the capitalist class to break mass strike actions like the 1919 great steel strike led by William Z. Foster and the capitalists fomented racial violence (large riots occurred in 26 cities). The Ku Klux Klan, reconstituted in 1915, was in full swing by 1920. The Communist Party was in its formative period and limited by a small number of Black members and insufficient involvement in the struggles of the Afro-American masses. In addition the capitalists unleashed a wave of anti-communism (e.g. two workers Sacco and Vanzetti, left-wing anarchists, were executed by the U.S. capitalists despite worldwide protests and mass demonstrations in the U.S.).

It was in this context that Garvey organized the biggest Afro-American movement between the Civil War and the upsurge of Black people's struggle in the '50s and '60s. At the beginning he had the support of the Black left (e.g., Cyril Briggs of the African Blood Brotherhood and A. Philip Randolph, who was then a militant socialist but has since degenerated into a bourgeois trade union bureaucrat) and people like DuBois, a consistent anti-imperialist.

Garvey accomplished this with a combination of spontaneous mass support and a demagogic mass style (e.g., expressing militant resistance to the KKK). But things turned into their opposite. Garvey openly courted imperialist governmental policy and the KKK, and spread racist views, including an attack on light-skinned Black people. In the era of imperialism, he openly declared capitalism to be progressive and enlightened, and advocated that Black workers not join trade unions but rely on their capitalist bosses.

His Pan Africanism was based on emigrationism though, contrary to his predecessors, he never even visited Africa nor did many of his followers settle there. Yet, he imperialistically proclaimed himself President of Africa and formed a government-in-exile with not one African included. Garvey had wild utopian dreams of colonizing Africa, though he was at his peak over 35 years after the Berlin conference had divided Africa between the major European colonial powers. His timing was the same as that of his main symbol of success, Booker T. Washington, who advocated handicraft production when Tuskegee was being financed by Andrew Carnegie and other monopoly industrialists and finance capitalists. Washington and Garvey were both men whose ideas about Black liberation were rendered impossible and reactionary by the development of imperialism.

In sum, the migrationist tendency of Pan Africanism must be viewed historically. During the slave period it was a legitimate demand for enslaved Africans, though it was not the main demand nor was it the most revolutionary demand. The results of the various emigrationist schemes were nearly all dismal failures, including the continued existence of the U.S. neo-colony of Liberia—which was definitely a failure as a solution to the oppression of Afro-Americans, though it did bring real benefits to the U.S. capitalists.

Following the Civil War and the last phase of a progressive bourgeois democratic period in the U.S., Black people were forged into a distinct nation and moves to return to an "African home" no longer had any progressive role, for the homeland of the Afro-American people was now in the U.S.A. However, in periods of intense repression and crisis there were several attempts (doomed to fail) to make emigration work. Following the rise of imperialism and the Russian revolution of 1917, the fight of the Afro-American people was a fight for complete emancipation in the context of a proletarian revolution for socialism in the U.S.—a fight that included the right of self-determination for the Afro-American nation but aimed at the abolition of exploitation as a whole as well as the special oppression of Afro-Americans. In its historical context the Garvey movement was a totally bankrupt plan that served to divide the working class and divert Black people away from their revolutionary task.

The second major Pan Africanist trend is the general struggle for democratic rights in Africa, support for African liberation. At the Berlin Conference in 1884-85 the major capitalist colonial powers, including the U.S.A. as an official observer, divided up the entire African continent among themselves (squabbling like thieves always do). Afro-Americans and Africans living in these countries took up struggle on behalf of the African masses after this conference. The main theoretician of this trend was W.E.B. DuBois.

There are two major stages to this aspect of the movement. First, from 1900 to 1945 there were major Pan-African Congresses (the first in 1900 was the brain child of H. Sylvester Williams, a West Indian lawyer, and the next five were under the leadership of DuBois and are referred to in a numbered sequence). These conferences were joint efforts by Afro-American, African and West Indian intellectuals and activists to push forward the just struggles and demands of the African masses.

Perhaps the main accomplishment of the 1900 meeting was to initiate discussion around a new concept—Pan Africanism. The first major event of considerable political importance was the First Pan African Congress initiated by DuBois after World War 1 in 1919. It was held in Paris simultaneously with the Versailles Peace Conference in order to more directly appeal to the major powers on behalf of the African masses.

The main demand was for international protection of the former colonial territories of a defeated Germany. The Peace Conference led to the League of Nations, and the demand of the Pan African Congress led to the Mandates Commission being formed as part of the League to oversee the former German lands. Additional demands were essentially democratic in character: abolishment of slavery and forced labor, right to literacy and vocational education, the right to participate in government, regulation of land use to preserve the natural resources, and the restriction of capital investment in the interest of the native peoples.

The next three Congresses generally upheld these types of democratic demands. For the most part participation was broad, but more consistently Afro-American and West Indian than African. And the class composition was nearly always intellectuals, politicians, and other petty bourgeois types. A new turn of events took place with the Fifth Pan African Congress, because the delegates were “workers, trade unionists, farmers, co-operative societies, and African and other coloured students . . . practical men and men of action . . .”

The significance of this Congress in the history of Pan Africanism is so fundamental that it is useful to quote the final statement in full, entitled *Declaration to the Colonial Peoples of the World*, written by Kwame Nkrumah:

“We believe in the rights of all peoples to govern themselves. We affirm the right of all colonial peoples to control their own destiny. All colonies must be free from foreign imperialist control, whether political or economic. The peoples of the colonies must have the right to elect their own government, a government without restrictions from a foreign power. We say to the peoples of the colonies that they must strive for these ends by all means at their disposal.

“The object of imperialist powers is to exploit. By granting the right to the colonial peoples to govern themselves, they are defeating that objective. Therefore, the struggle for political power by colonial and subject peoples is the first step towards, and the necessary pre-requisite to, complete social, economic and political emancipation.

“The Fifth Pan-African Congress, therefore, calls on the workers and farmers of the colonies to organize effectively. Colonial workers must be in the front lines of the battle against imperialism

“This Fifth Pan-African Congress calls on the intellectuals and professional classes of the colonies to awaken to their responsibilities. The long, long night is over. By fighting for trade union rights, the right to form co-operatives, freedom of the press, assembly, demonstration and strike; freedom to print and read the literature which is necessary for the education of the masses, you will be using the only means by which your liberties will be won and maintained. Today there is only one road to effective action—the organization of the masses.

“COLONIAL AND SUBJECT PEOPLES OF THE WORLD—UNITE!” (Approved and adopted by the Pan-African Congress held in Manchester, England, October 15-21, 1945)

And more explicitly, the delegates rang the death knell of foreign domination in Africa: “Yet, if the Western World is still determined to rule mankind by force, then Africans, as a last resort, may have to appeal to force in effect to achieve freedom, even if force destroys them and the world . . . We condemn the monopoly of capital and the role of private wealth and industry for private profit alone. We welcome economic democracy as the only real democracy. Therefore, we shall complain, appeal, and arraign. We will make the world listen to the facts of our condition. We will fight in every way we can for freedom, democracy and social betterment.”

The leadership of nearly every major independence movement in Africa which achieved their goal in the late '50s and early '60s either attended this conference or was influenced by it. World War 2, which arose out of the conflict between the imperialists but which changed its overall character with the attack by Germany on the Soviet Union, giving rise to a worldwide united front against

fascism and in defense of the only existing socialist country, the Soviet Union, helped create the conditions leading to this phase of the African revolution as it did throughout the Third World. Indeed, the fight of oppressed colonial and semi-colonial nations became the main force of world revolution following WW2.

After the Fifth Pan-African Congress in 1945 the movement split into two parts: the Africans returned to Africa and organized what developed into the independence movements that began achieving results in 1957 with Ghana, and the Afro-Americans went to work primarily in the U.S.A. to influence and change U.S. foreign policy regarding Africa.

The democratic spirit of the DuBois Pan African Congress was continued in an organization led by Paul Robeson called the Council of African Affairs (1937-1955). This was an organization specifically oriented to Africa in which Pan Africanists and communists worked together in the interest of the African revolution. Its main efforts were to carry out educational work among the American people on the struggle in Africa, and to organize resistance to U.S. imperialism. The main shortcoming of this was their lack of mass participation and struggle. Moreover, the petty opportunism of the executive director, Max Yergan, who buckled under to red-baiting campaigns and turned into a right-winger, led to the Council's gradually falling apart.

Immediately following this, the bourgeoisie mobilized its forces to back a group of petty bourgeois cultural elites who coopted Africa support work among Afro-Americans, and formed the American Society of African Culture to spread the concepts of "negritude" (the bourgeois nationalist view which says that all people of African origins—whether African, West Indian or Afro-American—have a common culture and should unite on this basis. "Negritude" negates the existence of national differences among these peoples, as well as any opposing *class* interests among them). This American Society of African Culture was exposed in the 1960s as a front for CIA funds and was forced to disband.

The importance of this group is that for over a decade it was the main link with African leadership and students. Perhaps the most significant event was their open collaboration with the U.S. State Department in organizing the U.S. involvement in the First World Festival of Black Art. hosted by the African personification of bourgeois cultural nationalism and main proponent of "negritude," President Leopold Senghor of Senegal.

These two organizations are the manifestations of two great dangers within the Pan Africanist movement: the first is the direct intervention of the imperialist state to subvert all genuine militant and progressive action. The second is the weak, vacillating and vulnerable nature of liberal reformist efforts divorced from mass struggle.

It is important to recognize that these two dangers were faced while Africa was gaining ground in throwing off the yoke of colonialism. Ghana's independence in 1957 was a significant event, and had a great impact on that part of the Afro-American community watching Africa. Indeed, this was followed by Guinea in 1958 and in 1960 *seventeen* African countries got their independence. The climax of this was the founding of the Organization of African Unity in 1963. The main thrust of Pan Africanism in the world had to be rooted in the concrete struggle of African countries to build unity and cooperation in driving colonial rule out of southern Africa and in making strides toward total social, economic and political independence.

The inspiration of African independence did not rekindle the flame of emigration, though a small group of intellectuals did expatriate to help build the new nation of Ghana. Rather, it gave impetus to the civil rights and national liberation movements in the U.S.A. In fact, the slogan "one man, one vote" that was used by SNCC throughout the Southern U.S. in the early 1960s was borrowed from the African struggle. This is an important point, because at no time during the 1960s and '70s has emigration been the main point of debate when Afro-Americans have discussed Africa.

The two major examples that reflect how Black people in the U.S. related to Africa during the 1960s are Malcolm X and SNCC. Malcolm X, a militant propagandist, spread the fire of national consciousness as the main speaker for the Nation of Islam. His initial position, as a Muslim, was to put forward the ideas about Africa that carried on the Garvey tradition. He attacked the concept "Negro" and, though mystified with the religious mythology of Elijah Muhammad, demanded that Blacks take on their true "African" identity. However, since he was rooted in the struggle of Black people in this country, his revolutionary thrust eventually led to his break with the Nation of Islam. He then traveled to Africa and, rather than propose settlement there, he successfully appealed to African leaders to assist in the fight of Black people within the U.S.A. Further, his last organizational effort was modeled after the Organization of African Unity and was called the Organization of Afro-American Unity.

SNCC, grounded in the fight for democratic rights in the Deep South during the early sixties, had two tendencies regarding Africa. Both of these came out in a trip that SNCC leadership made to Zambia in 1967 to participate in a United Nations Seminar on Africa. The public purpose was to present a SNCC position paper on "The Indivisible Struggle Against Racism, Colonialism and Apartheid," while the other concern was to make formal arrangements for an Afro-American Skills Bank Program to send highly trained Black technicians to aid in the development of African countries. This represented a program of struggle and emigration. As one

SNCC leader put it “. . . it was a sort of compromise between my feeling that all Afro-Americans should go to Africa and my feeling that we should stay to participate in the struggle here.” After the disintegration of SNCC in the late 1960s, most of the militant fighters stayed in the U.S. (though many like Julian Bond degenerated into petty politicians). A few demoralized leaders expatriated to Tanzania, the country which had replaced Ghana, after Nkrumah was deposed in 1966, as a beacon light for Pan Africanism.

While it is possible to point to these few key concrete examples of how Afro-Americans continued to relate to Africa, after the Fifth Pan African Congress the Pan Africanist movement in the U.S. was virtually dormant except for a few small groups mainly located in the large Black Northern ghetto strongholds of Black nationalism, e.g., Harlem and Chicago's South Side. The big rebirth of Pan Africanism came when the Black Power Conferences (1967-69) were transformed in 1970 into the Congress of Afrikan People (CAP).*

From 1970 to 1973, the Pan Africanist movement spread like wildfire among Afro-American youth, students, and generally in the Black petty bourgeoisie. It was the umbrella that united a wide assortment of Black nationalists, but as such Pan Africanism remained a much disputed concept in which lines were drawn between the emigrationist (pro-Garvey) position and the support-Africa-but-struggle-in-the-U.S.- position (pro-DuBois). Theoretical laziness prevailed as concepts, strategies, tactics and slogans were indiscriminately borrowed from the African struggles and mechanically used in relationship to the U.S.A. In place of a serious program of study to formulate a correct ideological line, petty bourgeois deviations based in Africa were relied upon, such as “African socialism,” and “Ujamaa” and “African Communalism,” which are utopian theories that point backwards to traditional Africa as the basis for socialism and deny the universal scientific truths of Marxism-Leninism.

The turning point was the call for a national demonstration in May of 1972 on the day the Organization of African Unity had designated as African Liberation Day. The first demonstration was the major culmination of the Pan Africanist bandwagon that had been roaming the U.S. for the previous two years. A broad coalition of Afro-American leaders and organizations, of all ideological positions, united behind the demonstration. Over 25,000 people joined in the Washington, D.C. and San Francisco demonstrations and Pan Africanism in the U.S.A. had taken up mass struggle challenging U.S. imperialism in support of Africa for the first time on such a scale.

After this demonstration, the coalition split and the more acti-

* CAP later transformed itself into a dogmatist sect, the Revolutionary Communist League; this was, unfortunately, a general tendency among left forces that emerged in the African Liberation Support Committee, but CAP first resisted and attacked the trend toward Marxism in ALSC and then switched to dogmatic “Marxism”—more on ALSC shortly.

vist organizations and individuals formed an on-going organization called the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC). The following year there were local demonstrations held in over 30 cities in the U.S. that involved an estimated 100,000 people. With these two major mass mobilizations, the ALSC faced contradictions in its work. As the efforts to educate the American people deepened, questions of ideological and political line came to the surface and began to hold back any further work. The major error in this period (focused at a national steering committee meeting of ALSC in June 1973) was made by the developing left forces, who forced formal political unity through the bourgeois bureaucratic method of a majority vote rather than achieving principled unity based on a protracted process of persuasion and discussion.

The positive result of this was that the left forces were able to consolidate, give more centralized leadership to ALSC and lead progressive actions in support of African liberation. For ALSC, however, the negative result was the principal aspect since some honest forces were forced out of ALSC. They spoke of their unpreparedness to deal with what appeared to them as a magic flip-flop of the leading Pan Africanists who one day emerged as instant communists with no summation and self-criticism. This represented a disregard for the masses by these left forces and an incorrect, petty bourgeois style of work. Moreover, it supported the genius theory of history since this ideological transformation was limited to a few and not summed up with and shared by the masses.

Out of the ALSC have come many strong fighters and communists. Ideological and political differences emerged through the heat of struggle in forums and documents and were taken up all over the country. The main forum was a national conference in 1974 in which a progressive anti-imperialist line won the day, and for the first time in this recent period of the 1970s, open discussions among broad sections of the Pan Africanist movement generally turned to lively discussions of Marxism. Even international gatherings were forums for continuation and deepening of this lively and productive discussion as the Sixth Pan African Congress in Tanzania demonstrated in 1975. At this meeting, the dominant line was to unite the progressive forces in Africa with forces fighting imperialism all over the world; this struck a blow against reactionary, racially based Pan Africanism.

But for a significant group, what appeared to be progressive did not remain so for long. For many who claimed to be communists, the ideological basis of Pan Africanism was not replaced by the world outlook of the proletariat, but merely covered with left phrases and outright dogmatism. The first major manifestation of this dogmatism surfaced in the August, 1974 national ALSC steering committee meeting in which the educational and ideological development of ALSC participants was to be focused on the burning

questions facing communists. This led to factionalism, attempts to liquidate ALSC in pretentious and unprincipled attempts to form communist organizations, and charges from the Pan Africanists that to be a Marxist-Leninist was to forget about the oppression and exploitation of Black people. The net result of this was that ALSC rapidly declined from nearly 50 chapters to only a small number in which almost the only members were the dogmatists and a few others—although a few honest forces remained in ALSC and its ability to play a progressive role, though seriously crippled, was not totally eliminated. Once again, we find “right” errors flipping into “left” errors.

PAN AFRICANISM: UTOPIAN OR SCIENTIFIC?

With a grasp of the historical developments of the two main trends of Afro-Americans’ relationship to Africa, we can now draw out the ideological essence of Pan Africanism. This is always a necessary task for communists, for all ideologies represent one class or another (and in today’s world they generally represent either the proletariat or the bourgeoisie) and in the final analysis only the proletariat and its ideology can lead the struggle of the masses consistently forward in revolutionary struggle.

The first aspect to consider is the philosophical question: what is the relationship between the material conditions of life and ideas? The Marxist theory of knowledge shows that concrete material reality is the basis of all correct knowledge and truth, while all forms of idealism are subjective creations that misrepresent concrete reality rather than correctly reflecting it. With this in mind, we must make a fundamental distinction between Pan Africanism and Marxism-Leninism.

One form of Pan Africanism maintains that the most fundamental division of humanity is racial. Race becomes the key concept that is supposed to represent the essential category within every society in the world. This is presented as the basis for Black Unity all over the world, and fundamentally establishes “concrete” racial unity as the essential category of history.

Throughout the history of the emigrationist tendency this has been a recurring theme. Edward Blyden,* drew a distinction between whites and Blacks by claiming that whites were “harsh, individualistic, competitive, and combative,” while Blacks were known for “the softer aspects of human nature: cheerfulness, sympathy, willingness to serve.” Decades later, Garvey said, “I believe in racial purity and in maintaining the standard of racial purity.” And there

* Blyden, a West Indian whose emigration to Liberia was sponsored by the American Colonization Society, was the foremost champion of emigration to Liberia for nearly 50 years.

are some who would put forth such ridiculous claims today.

Such claims find some following because much of the history of colonialism and imperialism involves the subjugation and oppression of non-European peoples by European exploiters, because there is national oppression in the U.S., which assumes a “racial” form, because in parts of Africa—particularly southern Africa—the African masses are still subjected to oppression based on racial distinctions and because racism is promoted as a prop for all this. But the theories which make racial divisions the fundamental thing in relations between people and nations fail to explain the material basis of colonialism, imperialism, and national and racial oppression—capitalist and other exploitive relations of production—and fail also to take into account that not every imperialist country is European (Japan certainly qualifies), that there is national oppression of Europeans by Europeans (England’s domination of Ireland is one example and there are many others in the history of Europe), and that within every country (leaving aside the socialist countries) there is exploitation of one class by another. In short, such theories are based on considering only part of reality and do not even correctly reflect that part of reality they do take into account—they are based on metaphysics.

These theories are also obviously based on idealism. The category of race is used by the bourgeoisie as an ideological weapon in its arsenal. It flourished throughout the 19th century as a rationalization for slavery and the continued domination of the peoples of the world, especially Asia, Africa, Latin America and Australia, as well as many parts of Europe. The vast majority of scientists throughout the world have debunked the concept and declared that it has very limited value. Recently, bourgeois academic apologists (the likes of Stanford’s Shockley and Berkeley’s Jensen) have attempted to generate a genetically-based theory of racial inferiority as an ideological attempt to rationalize the current attacks on nationally oppressed people in the U.S.A. In turn, Black academics like Francis Cress Welsing (formerly of Howard University) have developed genetically-based theories of Black superiority and white inferiority.

The materialist approach to this question is the opposite of this garbage. The key concept here is racism and not race, hence the cutting edge is not biology, but ideology. Racism is used to rationalize the basic conditions of economic exploitation and political oppression. It is only in this way that it is possible to know *all* of the victims of racism. This includes the entire working class because a divided class is a weak class. Racism hurts white workers as well as those nationally oppressed.

Moreover, Marxist-Leninists hold that the basic categories for understanding the historical identity of Black people, as with all people, are the concepts of class and nation. These two concepts

sum up the basic historically developed relations that people have with each other. The most fundamental one in every society is class. As all societies develop from primitive communalism—until they reach the stage of classless communism—there is a fundamental contradiction manifested in the struggle between an oppressed class and the ruling class, and there is always struggle between the exploiters and laborers, class struggle. In some cases, particularly the case of colonized oppressed nations, there is the task of national liberation in which the entire oppressed nation becomes the key historical category. However, even in this case, since we know that emerging within the fight for national liberation is the class struggle over its leadership and direction, class struggle is the key strategic link to the future—to the advance toward socialism and communism. This is the lesson of the Chinese revolution, and the lessons (both positive and negative) of all movements for independence, national liberation, and socialist revolution in Africa.

A second question that must be raised here is: “How has history developed?” In regard to Afro-Americans, Pan Africanism negates historical change in two major ways: it maintains that they are Africans as they have always been, and that Africa is the focus of the struggle of black people all over the world and it has always been. This view relegates the historical struggles of Afro-American people to being misguided and misinformed, because the goal has been to transform this country into a just society for all people and not primarily to transform Africa. It must negate the obvious changes in the material existence of Afro-American people (idealism) in order to pull off this static contention that the problem is the same as it has always been (metaphysics).

Of course, from a Marxist-Leninist standpoint, the world is constantly changing, the new replacing the old. There is a fundamental difference between an African slave wanting to escape slavery and return home and an Afro-American worker seeking to make a better life at home. Afro-Americans are a distinct people, and not primarily African. Any attempt to disregard this is like the ostrich who buries his head in the sand. He leaves his butt exposed to danger though he doesn't know it, because his head is in the dark.

A popular slogan that gets at the heart of this philosophical idealism is “We are an African People.” Popularized in the early 1970s around the Congress of Afrikan People led by Imamu Amiri Baraka, this slogan summed up the position that was being taken by Pan Africanists on the identity of Black people in the U.S. This slogan is based on the belief that consciousness determines being, while the Marxist-Leninist view is the opposite, that being determines consciousness. In other words, saying something is supposed to be magic. Here's how Carmichael puts it: “One of the most important things we must now begin to do, is to call ourselves ‘Afri-

can.’ No matter where we may be from, we are first of all and finally Africans. Africans. Africans. Africans.”

As materialists, our view of this is based on the actual conditions and actions of people and not simply what they say. The concrete historical motion of the Afro-American people clearly reveals an Afro-American national identity rooted in oppression and exploitation and affirmed in struggle for democratic rights and socialism.

In sum, the philosophical basis of Pan Africanism is idealism and metaphysics, while dialectical materialism is the basis of Marxism-Leninism. One is the world view of the bourgeoisie, the other the proletariat.

Pan Africanism in the U.S. is an application of these philosophical positions, and leads to doomsday prophecy, or empty bombast, about race war, or, if it leads to struggle at all, separate (though perhaps parallel) fights by the masses of Black and white people. Specifically, this means that with the Pan Africanist position, you have the following: Africa is for the African at home (meaning in Africa) and abroad (including the U.S.). The overall strategy for this is a Black United Front led by a Black mass political party. Again, the statements of Carmichael are a good illustration of this:

“When we say the African Revolution, we mean Africans scattered all over the world are to be involved in the same process at the same time.

“If you accept Pan Africanism then it means that you must have an all-Black party in the United States . . . that is a tactic. What we are struggling for is to see if we can agree on a common objective (the liberation and unification of Africa) which all of us will channel our energies toward. Then we will work out specific tactics.”

Black people all over the world, as all the world's people, are involved in the same worldwide struggle to destroy oppression and exploitation, but this is not the same in every concrete situation. On the African continent, while each specific country has specific conditions for its struggle, the general struggle has a national democratic character which, if led by the working class and its party, is the first stage leading to the socialist revolution. On the other hand, in the U.S. Black people are, in the main, part of the single U.S. working class and are engaged in a struggle for full democratic rights and socialism. This is the difference between a one-stage and a two-stage fight for socialism.

Also, this notion of a Black United Front and a Black political party is divisive and reactionary because it would liquidate the revolutionary unity of the proletariat. In this sense, they are tactical devices of bourgeois nationalism. The proletarian revolutionary stand is that the United Front Against Imperialism is the strategic

realignment of class forces under the leadership of the proletariat, represented by the multi-national communist party, made up of revolutionaries from all sections of society who take up and fight for the stand and interests of the working class. Thus, the strategic task is not to build a Black United Front, but *the* United Front, of which the solid core is the revolutionary alliance of the working class movement as a whole with the struggles of the oppressed nationalities.

These ideological differences can be clearly summed up by criticizing the contentions of George Padmore in his book *Pan Africanism or Communism*. Padmore, a West Indian, joined the communist movement in the U.S. and eventually played a leading role in work undertaken by the Communist International (Comintern) on issues involving Black people, especially Black workers and trade unionists. He dropped out because of his line that the World War 2 worldwide united front to defend socialism in the Soviet Union and defeat fascism was incorrect.

He held the view that Black people should fight for Africa first (the "my people first" line) and began to negate proletarian internationalism with the bourgeois internationalist line of Pan Africanism. His importance in the history of Pan Africanism is based on his leading theoretical role in Pan Africanist student circles in pre-WW2 London, in organizing the Fifth Pan African Conference in 1945, and in joining Nkrumah in Ghana as his advisor on African affairs.

Padmore makes three basic ideological errors that have historical precedents in the international communist movement and that are often supported by Pan Africanist forces in the U.S. today:

(1) Padmore does not base his views on a thoroughgoing class analysis. While he was in the communist movement his book *Life and Struggle of Negro Toilers* (1931) was a significant summation of conditions faced by Black workers. However, his defection to a consolidated Pan Africanist view mystified classes and class struggle under the concept of nation. This in essence cuts the revolutionary heart out of the African struggle and reduces the fight for new democracy (national liberation struggle led by the working class) to "old" democracy (led by the bourgeoisie).

(2) Padmore held the Kautskyite position of regarding imperialism as a policy and not the outcome of the laws that govern the capitalist mode of production when it develops to its monopoly stage. It is not unexpected, then, that he would issue an appeal (like those of the early Pan African Congresses) to the major imperialist forces to turn over a new leaf, admit their errors of "judgment," and replace their imperialist schemes with a benevolent "Marshall plan" for Africa. He claimed that this would provide a payoff for imperialist powers because at least Africa would not go communist.

This is a totally incorrect and opportunist line that turns reality on its head. The fact is that imperialism, as the highest stage of capitalist development, develops independent of the will of any specific capitalist forces. Neither can imperialism be defeated unless its roots are dug out of the ground which means the destruction of capitalism itself.

A contemporary Pan Africanist line will illustrate how this emerges in practice. In Detroit, the major production center of the automobile industry, a Pan Africanist group joined in the fight against U.S. corporations in South Africa. This was a good thing. However, the line they put forward did not advance the struggle. As good Pan Africanists they maintained that, while it was necessary to protest the policies of the auto corporations in South Africa, it wasn't necessary to link this up with the fight against these same imperialists in the U.S.—especially in Detroit! Here they united with petty politicians like Congressman Diggs who takes a progressive posture on South Africa but the reverse on the U.S. The general ideological error of Pan Africanism is combining two into one (incorrectly equating the struggles of African and Afro-American peoples). The specific error in this case was mechanically negating the dialectical unity of fighting against the same specific corporations (mainly General Motors, Ford and Chrysler) on two fronts and linking these fronts.

(3) The other major error Padmore makes is in denying the universal validity of Marxism-Leninism. This leads to calling for indigenous African forms of ideology, politics and organization. Moreover, it attacks communism as a threat to Africa because it would simply be replacing one "foreign master" (colonialist and imperialist countries) with another (socialist countries, especially—at that time—the Soviet Union). This line not only distorts the class struggle on a worldwide scale, but leaves the door open for the line that what unites these countries is white racial unity against Black people. The experience of the Chinese revolution destroys this line, unless you take the patently absurd position that because the Chinese uphold Marxism-Leninism (a "white" ideology) then they must be considered white as well.

Further lessons by negative example can easily be drawn from the revisionists and Trotskyites. The revisionist CP, USA (see review of Henry Winston's book *Strategy for a Black Agenda* in the August, 1974 issue of *Revolution*) throws the baby out with the wash by viewing Pan Africanism in an undialectical way. It's all bad to them, at least at this point, because it hasn't so far led the African countries to place themselves under the wing of the Soviet Union. This line is being carried out by the group they dominate, NAISCAL (National Anti-Imperialist Solidarity Committee With African Liberation). On the other hand, given the escalation of the predatory plans of the Soviet Union, this might reverse and result

in the opposite, an attempt to coopt Pan Africanism—and perhaps a contest with U.S. imperialism in these efforts at cooption. Already the CP promotes Nkrumah and certainly has no *principled* objections to Pan Africanism or to bourgeois nationalism generally, which it constantly promotes.

This position of unprincipled unity is today taken by Troskyites, and generally reflects their unholy alliance with bourgeois nationalism in the U.S. The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) swallows Pan Africanism whole and declares it is consistent with their phony brand of Marxism. So it is not surprising that several major Pan Africanist theoreticians have Trotskyite backgrounds, e.g., C.L.R. James (author of *Black Jacobins* and *A History of Pan African Revolt*). In sum, the lines of both the revisionists and Trotskyites on Pan Africanism, as on everything else, are thoroughly opportunist, and act to discredit Marxism—though perhaps not more effectively than recent converts to dogmatism—among people concerned with the liberation of black people in Africa and in the U.S.

REVOLUTION VERSUS REACTION

The political consequences of Pan Africanism in the U.S. today represent the actual results of the theoretical and historical developments summarized earlier. And the struggle between communism and Pan Africanism will emerge over concrete issues. It is on the basis of these concrete issues that the two ideological and political lines will sharpen, and definite lines of demarcation be drawn. The main thing is that this should be done with a correct style of work, based on the application of Marxism-Leninism and the mass line, to cure the illness and save the patient.

A major result of Pan Africanism is how it has provided “cover” for the further penetration of Africa by the U.S. imperialist class. The line that Afro-Americans are “really” Africans enables lackeys of the imperialists to operate openly in Africa and make U.S. imperialism more palatable. This had a recent manifestation when Andrew Young, chief spokesman for U.S. imperialism in the U.N., was greeted with the salutation *brother* when he entered the Security Council. Though it was probably done with tongue in cheek, it was portrayed in the media in such a way that Afro-Americans and all of the American people could have been misled into believing that in spite of the superpower policies of U.S. imperialism this Afro-American voice of the U.S. government could have close fraternal ties with Africans.

This brotherhood rap has also led to proposals for “dual citizenship” by which Afro-Americans would be able to maintain their U.S. citizenship and also become citizens of an African country. This proposal was agreed to by at least Liberia and Uganda. One exponent of this is Jesse Jackson of PUSH. In a typical slick rhetor-

ical way he summed up his views on this dual citizenship proposal with this quip: “Let’s start shippin’, and stop lippin’.” This reveals his class essence, because he was not referring to an emigrationist scheme, but capitalist trade relations in which Black entrepreneurs profit by posing themselves as middle men in trade between African countries and U.S. corporations. Of course this profit is at the expense of African people, with the lion’s share going to the imperialists.

This kind of thing has become a familiar appeal in several major Pan Africanist publications in which the major corporations openly call on Black college students and others to apply for work to see the world, especially Africa. Of course, all of this would happen while in the employ of a General Motors, IBM, or a Gulf Oil. More pointedly, in the *Black Collegian*, published in New Orleans with a large national circulation, every major federal agency runs large ads, including the armed forces and the CIA! It is no surprise that the editor of this publication, a long-time activist in the Congress of Afrikan People, has been a major voice in the Pan Africanist attacks on Marxism over the last few years.

Another way that this penetration takes place is in the realm of culture. With this idealist view that Afro-Americans are African, and that in essence Afro-American culture is the same as African culture, the export of degenerate culture with a black face from the U.S. is rationalized as being simply African culture. This is not only an essential ideological gimmick to sell products on the African market—“soul” records sell for four times as much as here, while consumers in undeveloped areas are convinced to buy shoes with 3-inch soles to walk in sand, etc. But this also serves to weaken African society with decadent bourgeois values (do your own thing, the use of drugs, sexual degeneracy, etc.). The youth wing of the leading party in Tanzania recently passed a resolution to oppose the importation of this type of culture, much of which enters via the U.S. information broadcasts and libraries and State Department sponsored tours!

The most direct and sinister way that this comes down is the use of Pan Africanism to justify the recruitment of Black mercenaries to fight in Africa on the side of reaction in unity with the South African fascist forces. This occurred during the recent Angola crisis when Roy Innis of CORE (whose official magazine is also filled with ads from the major corporations) openly recruited Black Vietnam veterans to join his scheme to serve the U.S. as superpower contention heated up. Innis got authority and a cover to do this based on participation in the OAU summit in 1973 where he was made part of the official Ugandan delegation which put forward a racially based Pan Africanist line. Although subsequent events and superpower contention brought some parting of ways between Innis and Idi Amin, this shows that Pan Africanism as an ideology is

a weapon that can be wielded by reactionaries of varying allegiances.

Another major political consequence is the roadblock Pan Africanism creates in diverting Black students away from their militant history of struggle. While the current political and economic crisis in the U.S. has a major impact on education by financial cutbacks, there are still nearly one million Black people in post-secondary education in the U.S., and over two million in the high schools. Out of the 1960s the Black studies movement became a militant battleground for the democratic right to a quality education, and as such, the struggles were "schools for war" (in some respects much like Lenin's analysis of strikes for the working class).

The general cover of Pan Africanism allows the school officials to better muddy the water so that students will get discouraged and disinterested. Most importantly it will disengage them from struggle. One ploy has been to recruit Africans and West Indians who had previously been government bureaucrats of one sort or another to run programs. (This should not be confused with the progressive forces from Africa and the West Indies whose presence is good in that the students are exposed to struggles in other parts of the world and are then more likely to develop good international awareness.) Another is to make the curriculum dull and academic, and focused mainly on Africa, ignoring or minimizing the objective need to have the U.S. and the struggles of Afro-American people the main focus of study.

Within the Black studies movement, Pan Africanism has led to a new international petty bourgeois elite, and reflects elitist disregard for the task of analyzing the historical experience and present day reality of Afro-Americans and helping to solve the concrete problems they face today. These new "leaders" have found satanic fellowship with all varieties of bourgeois nationalist forces in Africa, and openly express their desire to rid the Black movement of Marxist-Leninists. However, most of these people are very insecure in their positions as the cutbacks in education are often only one memo away from eliminating them as well. So, one of the positive developments is that they are forced to provide speakers on African liberation as a legitimating device to satisfy the hunger students have for something relevant to their lives and their desire to change the world. Of course they hope students in turn will protect their jobs. While it is only a minority who are consolidated to a totally bankrupt line, at this point this minority plays a leading role in the Black studies movement.

But it must be made absolutely clear that all of the political consequences of Pan Africanism are not negative. There are aspects of the Pan Africanist movement that are positive and have contributed to struggle. Pan Africanism has led to the mobilization of people in support of African liberation, provided increased awareness of U.S. imperialism in Africa and promoted the will to fight it. This

is clearly the case when we examine the impact of Pan Africanism on the militant Black youth, and some Black workers. But, since the essence of Pan Africanism is bourgeois ideology, the development of this movement and the consolidation of forces within it can turn into its opposite and become a force for reaction.

This is the main reason that a correct dialectical approach is necessary, to divide the good from the bad in the Pan Africanist movement, in the course of struggle building higher levels of unity around revolutionary principles. When people are in struggle, theory can be taken up in a lively way, with rapid shifts and leaps in consciousness. In this context a determined fight must be waged against the consolidated bourgeois forces, while uniting in actual battles with the struggling masses and helping them to sum up their experiences and repudiate incorrect views.

COMMUNISM OR PAN AFRICANISM?

The general objective of this article was to raise the question which road to Black liberation and socialist revolution, Pan Africanism or communism. In the sphere of theory, Pan Africanism is a bankrupt bourgeois trend that will retard revolutionary action, but in the practical battles of the Afro-American masses it can be a spark of struggle and in this limited way contribute to the overall movement. So our approach to Pan Africanism must be two sided.

As a consolidated line it represents the bourgeoisie and must be isolated, defeated, and thrown on the junk heap of history. At every point a clear line of demarcation must be made between Pan Africanism and Marxism-Leninism. As a stimulant to mass struggle it serves a positive historical purpose and insofar as the Pan-Africanist movement takes up the struggle against imperialism it has a progressive role to play and should be united with. Through the course of the struggle against imperialism many forces who are influenced by Pan Africanism but not wholly consolidated to it can be won over to a revolutionary road with the correct application of the mass line, and by practicing unity-criticism-unity.

On the international scale, Pan Africanism can be a positive force if it contributes to the united front against the superpowers. But the struggle is sharpening up in Africa, particularly southern Africa, and becoming more complicated. It is especially complicated because in many cases there is the task of overthrowing reactionaries in the U.S. camp while also defeating the "wizard of Oz" social-imperialists, who can bribe opportunist elements or mislead honest forces into vacillating on opposing their superpower hegemonic plans. Pan Africanism as an ideology won't provide the answers to these complex problems because it fails to correctly and concretely analyze the forces at work. It does not base itself on the analy-

sis of different class forces within Africa, or on the fact that Africa is not an undifferentiated whole but a continent divided into countries facing some common problems but also different conditions. It also has no clear analysis of the nature of different countries, including the Soviet Union. Clearly Pan Africanism cannot lead the struggle for liberation in Africa.

And while Pan Africanism may help propel some people in the U.S. into the struggle to support the African liberation movements, it fundamentally leads away from broadening and solidifying mass support for these struggles. This is because it negates the actual material basis for unity between the struggles of the people here and those in Africa. As has been pointed out this unity is not based on all black people being "one African People" but on common struggle against the common oppressor and exploiter, imperialism. This is true even though Afro-Americans do have roots in Africa and this does provide some basis of support for struggles there, but not the fundamental basis. This Pan Africanist line weakens struggle and support among Afro-American people as well as among the masses of American people as a whole.

Nonetheless, the fight for socialism in this country will be joined by people who have fought on many fronts. In the course of this many people will make a leap to revolutionary consciousness through ideological struggle and theoretical study. The most promising seedbed for this development is in the heat of mass struggle, where honest fighters come to the fore and can be recognized more easily and united with. This is the case with Pan Africanist movement, and this is the positive approach that communists should have toward militant fighters who emerge within it.

Pan Africanism is a deadend but it can be a meaningful beginning. If it is left to its own development, as with all spontaneous movements, it will degenerate and sink into the cesspool of wild utopian schemes. When communists step forward, unite with progressive militant fighters, win them over to a correct revolutionary line using the democratic process of persuasion, then it can be a beginning by which the ranks of the revolutionary movement will be swelled and the decisive hour of proletarian revolution will be that much closer.

Reformist and Revolutionary Views of Capitalist Crisis A Critique of "New Marxism"

M.F.Z.

The following is the first of two articles on this subject—Ed.

In the past several years, while growing numbers of class conscious workers are taking up the struggle to grasp Marxist political economy to be more scientific and effective revolutionaries, interest in Marxism has increased significantly among younger economists and other academics in the United States. The bankruptcy and apologetic character of bourgeois economics is becoming increasingly obvious with the actual development of society—especially the war in Vietnam and the present deepening economic crisis, with the popular movements and the increasingly class conscious struggle of the U.S. working class itself rising in society. Many radicals of the 1960s are increasingly being drawn to Marxism as the basis for analyzing society. Others newly involved in struggle are also studying Marx.

Ten years ago there were virtually no courses in Marxism in any economics department in the United States. Today several universities have graduate programs in political economy, thousands of undergraduates study Marx at dozens of colleges, and a growing number of books, articles and academic journals are devoted to interpreting and applying Marxism to contemporary developments. Even Paul Samuelson, preeminent bourgeois apologist among economists, has been compelled to include a discussion of Marx in recent editions of his basic freshman college text, *Economics*,¹ if only to try to show that Marx was all wrong.

Overall, the direction towards Marxism among academics is an advance. It provides a basis for deeper and broader discussion among the petty bourgeoisie about the nature of capitalism, the role of the working class and the course of revolution. It helps make it possible to draw broader sections of the petty bourgeoisie to the side of the working class in developing scientific theory and in more conscious active struggle around social conditions. But like everything else, this development is not a straight line of advance. It is and must be filled with back and forth struggle.

¹ Samuelson, Paul A., *Economics*, McGraw-Hill.

Marxism is not just a set of "good ideas," much less an intellectual curiosity about which one can say anything at all. Marxism is the science of the working class, a scientific concentration of the history of society and of the daily experience and historic tasks of the working class. Marxism is a weapon and tool for the working class, necessary to show the material basis of class struggle, social decay, crisis and war, necessary to guide the class struggle to its necessary and inevitable conclusion, the overthrow and final elimination of capitalism, of class society. Only with the compass of Marxism, the scientific summation of class struggle and social development, is it possible for the working class to seize power, to exercise conscious political rule, continue to revolutionize the relations of production, continue to develop the forces of production and finally to annihilate the last vestiges of the bourgeoisie and bring all humanity into classless society, communism, free of all exploitation and oppression.

Marxism is the basis of *political* economy because political economy—genuinely scientific, as opposed to bourgeois, political economy—analyzes capitalism in order to guide the working class in its revolutionary struggle. It is therefore hardly surprising that since Marx first systematized it Marxism has been the subject of intense debate, reflecting sharp class struggle, continuing until today. The bourgeoisie has attacked it consistently, at times openly, at times in more subtle ways, by advancing "interpretations" which claim to be Marxist but which tear the revolutionary heart out of Marxism and leave behind a harmless pap of reformism really based on bourgeois theories and petty bourgeois aspirations.

As the economic crisis intensifies, world war comes closer, and the political rule of the bourgeoisie is more and more widely called into question, and as the revolutionary movement of the working class develops in the midst of these conditions, the bourgeoisie will throw this revisionism and reformism at the workers movement to destroy it, all in the name of Marxism, Marxism-Leninism and the best interests of the working class.

It is in this context that the recent resurgence of interest in Marxism among academics must be analyzed. As the petty bourgeoisie approaches the science of Marxism, it *spontaneously* tends to confuse it, bring preconceived ideas and bourgeois methods into it, and often ends up turning Marxism upside down. On this basis a number of would-be Marxists end up with wrong political conclusions and despite themselves turn out to be new apologists for the bourgeoisie. They make such a hash of Marx that they, and often those who try to learn from them, ultimately give up on Marxism altogether as errant nonsense. However honest their intentions, the work of many of the newly emerging "Marxist economists" in the United States generally and spontaneously

stands as so much ammunition for the bourgeoisie to use against the working class.

This situation is hardly surprising in the United States (much the same is true for most capitalist countries today), where, for over 20 years and until very recently, there has been no communist party leading the working class towards revolution. There was a considerable period when there was no serious and significant attempt to apply the science of Marxism, and political economy in particular, to develop a deeper understanding of the workings of advanced capitalism in the United States. The formation of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA and the beginning development of a revolutionary workers movement in this country lay the basis for making advances in applying scientific political economy to our own situation. To do this we have to be good at exposing and discarding sham Marxism while striving for a scientific grasp of monopoly capitalism, as well as its particular features in the U.S. In this way, the struggle of the working class can become more conscious and clearly aimed at proletarian revolution, and many academics attracted to the study of Marxism can be won to the side of the working class.

II

The current economic crisis has been the subject of many articles by the "new Marxists," and has led to new investigations into the theory of capitalist crisis. One of the most widely known and influential of these articles is by Raford Boddy and James Crotty.² It is typical of the kind of problems which arise in the new trend toward Marxism, and an examination of its major points will help not only to expose its erroneous basis but to gain a firmer foundation in the actual principles of Marxist political economy and its application to the U.S. today.

Boddy/Crotty try to base themselves in Marx. "We believe that the key to understanding both macro-economic policy and business cycles in the post-war era is still to be found in Marx's theory of the dynamics of the cycle in competitive capitalism . . ."³ But they go on to explain this theory in terms of a "profit squeeze" which occurs as the capitalist economy expands in a boom period. In economic expansion unemployment falls and this "strengthens the bargaining position of the working class in its labor market confrontation with capital. This allows workers to struggle successfully for higher real wages and a larger share of total income, thus squeezing profits towards the peak of the

² Boddy, R. and Crotty, J., "Class Conflict, Keynesian Policies, and the Business Cycle," *Monthly Review*, Vol. 26, No. 5, October 1974.

³ *Ibid*, p. 2.

boom.”⁴ Then, they say, the fall in profit rates brings the boom to a halt and the crisis begins. To Boddy/Crotty, the decline in profits is just a mirror reflection of a rise in real wages.

In an attempt to root this in Marx, they quote:

“If the quantity of unpaid labor supplied by the working class, and accumulated by the capitalist class, increases so rapidly that its conversion into capital requires an extraordinary addition of paid labor, then wages rise, and, all other circumstances remaining equal, the unpaid labor diminishes in proportion. But as soon as the diminution touches the point at which the surplus labor that nourishes capital is no longer supplied in normal quantity, a reaction sets in: a smaller part of revenue is capitalized, accumulation lags, and the movement of rise in wages receives a check. The rise of wages is therefore confined within limits that not only leave intact the foundations of the capitalist system, but also secure its reproduction on a progressive scale.”⁵

What Marx means here is that when the accumulation of capital accelerates, and the economy expands rapidly, a large number of workers have to be hired; then wages will rise and overall the ratio of paid labor to unpaid labor—or, translated into money terms, wages to profit (surplus value)—will go up. But the very workings of the capitalist system—the fact that capital is exactly the means of exploiting human labor power and that capitalist accumulation means the appropriation of the unpaid labor of others—works to offset such a tendency for wages to rise, so that wages are, as Marx says, “confined within limits” that serve the accumulation of greater unpaid labor.

Boddy/Crotty miss the essence of this, but taking off from what they believe to be a basis in Marx, they present data which indicate that real wages rise during economic expansions, and rise faster than productivity in boom periods. They show that the corporate profits after taxes fall during the boom. Their conclusion is that “these variations in wage rates provide some information on the *source* of the noted profit squeeze . . . the resultant decline in the profit rate is thus directly attributable to labor ‘problems.’”⁶ (emphasis added) In other words, crisis is brought about by the workers securing higher wages during a boom. What’s this?! Is it really Marx, or is it the *Wall Street Journal*? Could they both be saying the same thing since they’re both talk-

⁴ Ibid, p. 3.

⁵ Ibid, quoting Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, New York, International Publishers, 1967, p. 620; Boddy/Crotty, p. 3.

⁶ Ibid, p. 8.

ing about capitalism, and facts are facts?

Whatever their intentions, Boddy and Crotty have “applied” Marx to defeat Marxism and strike a blow against the working class. Their line objectively merges with that of the traitorous trade union heads who call on the workers to sacrifice to help “solve” the crisis.

Even the extensive quote from *Capital* reproduced above defeats Boddy/Crotty, and shows they have the theory turned on its head. It is not a change in wages which moves the business cycle. Market conditions of supply and demand are not the “source” of crisis. Here Marx says “the rise in wages is confined within limits that . . . secure [capitalism’s] reproduction on a progressive scale.” Crisis is not confined within the limits of wages. Wages themselves are confined within limits. What are these “limits”? They are the laws governing the accumulation of capital, the law of value discovered and elaborated by Marx throughout his work to show that crisis and proletarian revolution are necessary features of capitalism and arise from the very heart of capitalism itself, the creation and accumulation of surplus value in commodity production.

Overall, the argument presented by Boddy and Crotty to explain crisis rests on two points. First, if production is unprofitable it will cease, there will be general unemployment and the crisis will continue until conditions of profitability are restored. Second, and the essential distinguishing point of their argument is the one we have touched on already—that changes in profitability are conditioned by changes in wages, so that as wages rise more rapidly than productivity profits are “squeezed” and production is curtailed.

The heart of this argument is that crisis has its origin in the way products are distributed in society. It says that if the workers get “too much” there will be “too little” for the capitalists, who won’t find it worthwhile to pay for continued production because they’re not getting enough out of the deal.

This is an argument which has been around for 150 years, first presented by one of the most sophisticated bourgeois political economists who ever lived, David Ricardo. He too thought it was essential to consider conditions of profitability, and answered those at the time who worried how the capitalists could ever sell all the things which were being produced by saying:

“ . . . there is no limit to demand—no limit to the employment of capital while it yields any profit, and that however abundant capital may become, there is no other adequate reason for a fall of profit but a rise in wages . . . ”⁷ (emphasis

⁷ Quoted in Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, Part 2, p. 527.

added)

Boddy and Crotty have different reasons to explain the rise in wages, emphasizing the class struggle instead of Ricardo's focus on the (supposed) declining productivity of land (which would mean a rise in the price of necessities and hence of wages), but whatever the reasons for a change in wages, the theory is essentially the same.

This theory was analyzed by Marx, who pointed out:

"It rests on the false assumption that the rate of surplus value and the rate of profit are identical, that therefore a fall in the rate of profit is identical with a fall in the rate of surplus value . . ." ⁸

In fact all profit is surplus value, value created by living labor in the course of production which produces a value greater than the value of the labor power the workers sell to their employers. For society as a whole, the total profit, no matter what shape it may assume (including rents and interest and the revenues of government, financial and other unproductive sectors of the economy), is the money form of the total surplus value created in production. As Marx put it, "The mass of profit equals the mass of surplus value," but the *rate* of profit is not the same as the rate of surplus value—a crucial point, as we shall see.

Ricardo, as most bourgeois economists before Marx, understood that labor was the source of all value, but they did not understand the mechanism by which value was created and appropriated as profit. While correctly seeing that living labor was the only *creator* of value, they incorrectly said that living labor was the only thing that *contributed* value to a commodity, thereby ignoring the fact that constant capital (raw materials, plant and equipment, etc.) *contributes* value to a commodity insofar as the constant capital is used up in production. (The value of the constant capital has its ultimate origin in the living labor required to produce *it*, but this value is merely *transferred* to its product in whose production it is constant capital.)

Because Ricardo did not understand the role of constant capital in production, he wrote, "The labor of a million men in manufactures will always produce the same value," ⁹ to which Marx responds:

"This is quite wrong. The value of the product of a million men does not depend solely on their labor but also on

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 439.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 538.

the value of the capital with which they work; it will thus vary considerably, according to the amount of the already produced productive forces with which they work." ¹⁰

Ricardo and the bourgeois economists did not understand how value was produced, also, because they did not understand the distinction between labor and labor power. Marx was the first to show that the worker sells labor power, the ability to do work, as a commodity to the capitalists, and that this commodity has the unique property that in its use (the act of working) it *creates* value beyond its own value. On this basis, it is possible to see how surplus value is produced in the very act of creating value in produced commodities.

Because Ricardo and the bourgeois economists did not understand how value was produced, they could not trace the origins of profit, and so could not understand why profit would grow or decline. To them, profit was represented by the share of the total product which went to the capitalists, compared with the share which went to the workers. The rate of profit became the amount of profit measured against the total output, rather than the amount of profit measured against the total outlay of capital necessary to produce that profit.

The rate of surplus value, or rate of exploitation, is measured by the ratio s/v , the ratio of the surplus value produced to the variable capital laid out, from which the surplus value arises. On the other hand, bourgeois economists understand the total output to be divided between the share received by the capitalists, s , and the share going to the workers, v . On this basis, especially those bourgeois economists who share Ricardo's analysis measure the rate of profit in relation to the total output, so that the only thing which can drive down the rate of profit (by which they mean the share going to capitalists) is a change in the share of output going to the workers, a reduction in the rate of exploitation.

But the scientific formulation of the rate of profit is in relation to the total capital outlay, $s/c+v$. Here we can see that *the way production is carried out*, reflected in the proportion of the total outlay that goes to constant capital as opposed to variable capital (measured by the "organic composition of capital," c/v), influences the rate of profit because constant capital creates no value.

Only variable capital—or the exchange of it for labor power and the use of that labor power—creates value, and as the organic composition of capital changes with the development of production, so that variable capital is a smaller part of total capital out-

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 538.

lay, the basis on which profits can arise shrinks in proportion to the total capital advanced. This creates the framework in which class struggle over wages takes place.

The fact that constant capital increases in relation to variable capital tends to create a "superabundance" of workers which weakens their ability to struggle for higher wages. This, in addition to the general fact that the capitalists own the means of production and the workers must sell their labor power, shows that it is production that dominates distribution (the amount of the total social production that goes to different classes), not distribution that dominates production.

Boddy/Crotty present data on factor shares (the share of the total income of society going to the two "factors of production," labor and capital) to substantiate their thesis that in the boom wages rise at the expense of profits. Their procedure, which suffers from the theoretical problems of confusion of the rate of surplus value with the rate of profit, is all the more inappropriate because they take bourgeois categories as reflections of Marxist categories. Supposing that one wanted to measure the rate of surplus value, s/v , it would be wrong to take measured industrial profit as surplus value, and wrong to take the total amount paid out in wages as the sole measure of variable capital. Yet this is what Boddy/Crotty do.

Surplus value appears in a variety of money forms. Profits in manufacturing is only one such form. Taxes, rents, interest, the total receipts of insurance companies, as well as wages paid to unproductive workers throughout the economy, to name only some, are all money forms of surplus value created by productive labor.

Furthermore, the fact that wages are rising does not necessarily mean that the value of labor power is rising. As Marx pointed out:

"In prolonging the working day the capitalist may pay *higher wages* and still lower the *value of labor power*, if the rise in wages does not correspond to the greater amount of labor extracted, and the quicker decay of the laboring power thus caused. This may be done in another way. Your middle-class statisticians will tell you, for instance, that the average wages of factory families in Lancashire have risen. They forget that instead of the labor of the man, the head of the family, his wife and perhaps three or four children are now thrown under the juggernaut wheels of capital, and the rise of the aggregate wages does not correspond to the aggregate surplus labor extracted from the family.

"Even within the limits of the working day . . . by increasing the *intensity* of labor, a man may be made to expend as much vital force in one hour as he formerly did in

two . . ."11

The lengthening of the working day, the introduction into the work force of several members of a family, and the intensification of labor are all very much present today as attacks on the working class. Bourgeois statistics, reflecting bourgeois categories, totally ignore the basic social relations in production as reflected by the concept of value. These statistics can never be used directly to trace the underlying movements of accumulation of capital.

In effect, Boddy and Crotty have only in view

"... the *quantitative determination* of exchange value, namely that it is the same as a definite quantity of labor time, forgetting as against this the *qualitative determinant*, that individual labor, through its separation, must be represented as *general abstract social labor*."12

In other words, they liquidate the social content of labor's relation to capital—the fact that it must sell its labor power ("general abstract social labor") to capital which exploits it in production to accumulate surplus value—and thereby deny any basis for the antagonistic inner contradiction of the capitalist mode of production. These errors arise precisely because they depart from a scientific approach to exploitation, surplus value and accumulation. What they miss, in sum, is that, even while paying out more in wages, the capitalist can lower the value of labor power and can increase his surplus value in relation to variable capital, increase the ratio of unpaid labor, the rate of exploitation.

Boddy and Crotty, like many other "new Marxists," recognize that the rate of profit is key to analysis of crisis and capitalism in general. But this doesn't make one a Marxist. Even carrying out the discussion in the language of Marxism, referring to rates of surplus value and falling rates of profit, doesn't suffice. (Boddy and Crotty don't do this, aside from their quote from Marx, but many others do, including modern Soviet "political economists" who have merely recreated a sloppy version of what Adam Smith and Ricardo wrote, for the bourgeoisie, in much the same terms 200 years ago.)

The tendency of the rate of profit to fall is a key contradiction of capitalism, but it is essential to understand how and why this happens. Responding to Ricardo over 100 years ago, Marx wrote,

"The rate of profit falls, although the rate of surplus value remains the same or rises, because the proportion of vari-

11 Marx, *Wages, Price and Profit*, Peking Foreign Language Press Edition, p. 68.

12 Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, Part 2

able capital to constant capital decreases with the development of the productive powers of labor. The rate of profit thus falls, not because labor becomes less productive, but because it becomes more productive. Not because the worker is less exploited, but because he is more exploited . . .”¹³

In fact, the quote from Marx which Boddy and Crotty and a host of others present as the representation of “Marx’s theory of the dynamics of the cycle in competitive capitalism” is taken from a chapter of *Capital*¹⁴ whose whole point is to show precisely that the organic composition of capital *must* rise, and that this change in the way production is carried out generates the reserve army of the unemployed. *In this context* it is completely correct to point out that the rate of exploitation has an effect on the rate of profit, and that the ebbs and flows of the reserve army have an influence on wages which in turn can influence profits. But it must not be forgotten that these changes in wages and market conditions arise from, have their “limits” set by, the laws of capital accumulation. As Marx says in that very chapter:

“It is these absolute movements of the accumulation of capital which are reflected as relative movements of the mass of exploitable labor-power, and therefore seem produced by the latter’s own independent movement. To put it mathematically: the rate of accumulation is the independent, not the dependent, variable; the rate of wages, the dependent, not the independent, variable.”¹⁵

What Marx emphasizes above is that under capitalism labor is dependent on capital, not vice versa, and specifically that the numbers of workers who are employed, and linked to this the wages of the workers, are determined by the accumulation of capital, are dependent on the conditions of profitability for the capitalist—and not the reverse. Thus, Marx notes that even when a rise in wages occurs and has a downward influence on profits, accumulation slows, reducing the work force and exerting a downward pressure on wages. Thus,

“The mechanism of the process of capitalist production removes the very obstacles that it temporarily creates. The price of labor falls again to a level corresponding with the needs of the self-expansion of capital . . .”¹⁶

¹³ Ibid, p. 439.

¹⁴ Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, Chapter 25, “The General Law of Capitalist Accumulation.”

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 620.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 619.

Turning this relationship upside down is a failing not only of many openly bourgeois economists, but of many of the “new Marxists” as well. Such errors in political economy lead very directly to important political errors in assessing class forces and their relative strengths and weaknesses.

This comes out in the way Boddy and Crotty treat the role of the capitalist state. While pointing to “Marx’s theory of the dynamics of the cycle in competitive capitalism,” they make sure to note that:

“We do not intend to argue that there has been no essential change since Marx’s day in the dynamics of the cycle. Rather we want to strongly emphasize that the state, through its monetary and fiscal operations, can and has significantly altered the pattern of economic activity. The business cycle of the postwar period has been determined by the interaction of both private sector and state activities. The postwar [WW2] cycle is *political* as well as economic.”¹⁷

Evidently, the “essential change” is the introduction of the state into the economy in a capacity of would-be regulator. This change, they are careful to point out, is an addition to, and not a substitution for, the basic Marxist framework. But because they are wrong about that framework, Boddy/Crotty and others who work along these lines cannot successfully deal with the important growth of state economic activity.

In discussing the role of macro-policy (government policy on taxes and the level of expenditures), they say:

“Its function is to ensure that the alternating pressures for expansion and contraction emanating from the private sector result in that cyclical pattern most conducive to long-run profit maximization. The goal of macro-policy, in other words, is not to eliminate the cycle but to guide it in the interest of the capitalist class.”¹⁸

The capitalist state, being the instrument of political rule of the bourgeoisie, certainly approaches macro-policy “to guide it in the interests of the capitalist class,” and that certainly involves trying to keep profits up. But without a clear understanding of the process by which profit is accumulated, how are we to understand the struggle within the bourgeoisie over these policies, and more important for the working class, which has no interest whatever in

¹⁷ Boddy/Crotty, op. cit., p. 2.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 11.



Volume 1, Number 1
October 1976

the COMMUNIST

Theoretical Journal of the Central Committee
Of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA

- Commodities, Capitalism, Class Divisions—
and their Abolition with the
Achievement of Communism
- Social-Imperialism and Social-Democracy,
Cover-Up of Capitalism in the USSR
(or How Martin Nicolaus and the October League Have
"Restored" Socialism in the Soviet Union)
- Bourgeois Democracy and the
U.S. Working Class
- On the Character of World War 2
- Bourgeois Right, Economism, and the
Goal of the Working Class Struggle

\$2

ORDER FROM: RCP Publications
P.O. Box 3486 Merchandise Mart
Chicago, Illinois 60654

coming up with those policies, how can we assess the likely impact of government policy on the course of accumulation, exploitation, crisis, etc.?

Boddy/Crotty have a theory of profit—Ricardo's, which has been discussed above. In this theory, profits are a question of distribution, and so the theory of the state as it relates to this question develops as a theory of the impact of the state on distribution, not on production. As Boddy and Crotty express it:

"In developing a class conflict theory within which to interpret macro-policy, we have focused attention on tendencies in the movement of real wages and factor shares over the course of the typical postwar cycle."¹⁹

The state enters the picture as a lever on distribution to club down the workers and in particular to adjust the cycle to yield appropriate levels of unemployment to discipline labor. They go into this in some detail, based on the understanding that full employment creates the labor market conditions in which the working class can raise wages faster than productivity and thus threaten profits. They pose and answer this question:

"Should the state, in the service of the capitalist class, aim for sizable yet steady rates of unemployment? We think not [because] the *rate of change* of unemployment, as well as the *level and duration* of unemployment, is a fundamental determinant of labor confidence and militancy."²⁰

Boddy and Crotty pursue their class conflict theory to evaluate the recession in the U.S. economy towards the end of the Vietnam war (1969-70) and the developments leading up to Nixon's imposition of wage and price controls in August 1971. It is worth quoting them at length on this:

"... a substantial part of recent international and domestic complications is directly or indirectly attributable to the inability of American capital to pursue its standard cyclical relaxation *policies* during the main war period.

"In 1969 the incoming administration began to deal with its problems by means of a classic recessionary macro-policy....

"What caused the administration to pull back from its cyclical-relaxation *policy* and substitute the NEP,

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 11.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 10.

with its wage-price controls? Restrictive policy was eased in 1970 because its continuation would have led to a rate of unemployment so high that it could not have been reduced to a politically acceptable level in time for the 1972 presidential election; because corporation profits, squeezed first by five years of tight labor markets and then by the initial impact of the recession, were in need of immediate relief; and because the credit structure was under dangerous pressure. . .

“On the one hand, the capitalists needed expansionary macro-policy to stimulate short-run profits and investment and to keep unemployment from rising too high. On the other hand, they needed restrictive policy to kick interest rates back up, to improve the trade balance, and to get labor fully under control. By August 1971 there was simply no combination of standard macro-policy tools which could cope with all these contradictory pressures . . . The administration’s response was the NEP.

“Was the emergence of wage-price controls in this period only a temporary expedient occasioned by a temporary conjunction of contradictions? We believe not. Rather it signifies a deeper, more secular dilemma for U.S. capital.

“*Reliance on the business cycle to discipline labor has been a costly policy for American capitalism.*”²¹ (emphasis added)

Here the business cycle is presented as a *policy*, something the bourgeoisie controls and uses for its own profit-making purposes. But Boddy and Crotty are obviously aware that “pressures for expansion and contraction emanate from the private sector,” and point out that “it should *also* be remembered that a capitalist economy is *inherently* volatile.”²² (emphasis added)

They describe a policy beset by conditions which are out of control and which present contradictory signals in the framework of their class-conflict theory. But because they are bound by an incorrect theory of crisis, they cannot interpret or explore the conditions which constrain policy; instead they are forced to interpret the policy in light of the supposed needs of distribution. They see that the imposition of controls was not a policy dictated by the “*temporary* conjunction of contradictions” involved in the immediate situation. So they up the ante and present the change in policy as a long run strategic move on the part of the bourgeoisie to find a less “costly policy” for disciplining labor.

Many people have objected to Boddy/Crotty at this point on

²¹ Ibid, pp. 14-15.

²² Ibid, p. 11.

grounds that Boddy/Crotty present a voluntarist picture of the bourgeoisie causing crisis through government policy, and therefore a bourgeoisie in control of the economy and able to do what it wants to secure its interests.

Boddy/Crotty do give much too much freedom to the bourgeoisie, but not because they believe the state causes crisis. They see the crisis stemming from the private sector, not the state, and see the state responding as best it can to the developments in the private sector. There *is* government policy, and it does respond as best it can to the conditions presented in society overall. But because they see the crisis arising in distribution, they focus on factor shares which to them can only be determined by “class struggle,” in which the working class has certain weapons (strikes, militancy, tight labor markets) and the bourgeoisie has certain weapons (a controlled cycle, anti-strike legislation, wage controls).

The freedom incorrectly given the bourgeoisie is the “freedom” to seek profits in the sphere of distribution without reference to the conditions of production. Without a foundation in the theory of value, they are incapable of analyzing the *necessities imposed* on policy by the basic developments of the economy. They can only share with the bourgeoisie a bewilderment over the “contradictory pressures” of the economy, contradictions which are certainly sharpened as the bourgeoisie implements policies aimed at controlling distribution.

They end up by converting their erroneous theory of fiscal policy-as-tactic (for short run control) into an equally but perhaps more obviously erroneous theory of fiscal policy-as-strategy (long range control). This is confirmed by their assessment that “in the absence of alternative methods of disciplining labor, recession planning cannot be discarded without endangering capitalist-class dominance.”²³

This voluntarist approach shows up also in Boddy/Crotty’s treatment of relations among the capitalists. Citing the “relative anarchy of American capitalism” and its consequent “bouts of sluggish growth” as a barrier to “efficient” rationalization of capital and the weeding out of low-profit capitals, they say that:

“This lack of coordination puts U.S. capitalists at a disadvantage relative to their competitors . . . The giant U.S. multinational corporations must engage in long-term planning, particularly with respect to investment programs, if they are to maintain economic supremacy. . . They would like to create an American version of it [the Japanese structure of ‘close industry-banking-government collaboration on investment, zaibatsu or cartel arrangements, and ‘paternalis-

²³ Ibid, p. 16.

tic' personnel policies]. The task of American capital is not only to modify these methods to fit American conditions, but more importantly to wage the major power struggle *within* the capitalist class, as well as between capital and labor, required for the implementation of such arrangements.

"... (Nixon) appeared to have gained the political power which a *successful* [emphasis added] attempt at the reorganization of American capitalism would require. The unmasking of Nixon through the Watergate affair stripped him of the *legitimacy and power needed for the job* [emphasis added] and has thus probably postponed serious attempts at reorganization."²⁴

The bourgeoisie may well *want* to rationalize and plan, and may even take some steps in the direction suggested, but an understanding of the material basis of profit, value theory, teaches us that it is *impossible* for the bourgeoisie to accomplish this. The surplus value created by the workers in production must be privately appropriated by individual capitals in the form of money profit, and *this* necessity generates so much competition that all attempts to plan and limit the anarchy of production must be blown apart by the force of increased competition and increased anarchy. In fact, the Japanese model referred to has been torn apart by the crisis, and in the U.S., while there is some pressure for planning, there is presently even more for *deregulation* to allow market forces of competition to weed out the inefficient capitals (the airline industry is a particularly striking example of this today).

The voluntarism here is fairly plain to the degree that Boddy/Crotty suggest the possibility of a potential solution, a policy of state, a policy which could be successful if only someone had the "legitimacy and power needed for the job." But again, this endowment of the bourgeoisie with such mystical capabilities has its origin in the fundamental error of all bourgeois political economy, the neglect of the theory of value and the contradictions inherent in the capitalist mode of production on which all social and political matters in capitalist society rest.

Engels, in making the general point that the state cannot prevent by force the abolition of an outmoded system of production, sheds light on the inability of the capitalists' state to resolve the contradictions inherent in capitalist production. Where

"... force works against economic development. . . force succumbs to it. . . where—apart from cases of conquest—the internal public force of a country stands in opposition to its economic development, as at a certain stage has oc-

²⁴ Ibid, pp. 16-17.

curred with almost every political power in the past, the contest has always ended with the downfall of the political power. Inexorably and without exception the economic evolution has forced its way through."²⁵

Marx also pointed out that:

"So long as things go well, competition effects an operating fraternity of the capitalist class, as we have seen in the case of the equalization of the rate of profit, so that each shares in the common loot in proportion to the size of its respective investment. But as soon as it no longer is a question of sharing profits, but of sharing losses, everyone tries to reduce his own share to a minimum and to shove it off upon another. The class, as such, must inevitably lose. How much the individual capitalist must bear of the loss, i.e., to what extent he must share in it at all, is decided by strength and cunning, and competition then becomes a fight among hostile brothers. The antagonism between each individual capitalist's interests and those of the capitalist class as a whole, then comes to the surface, just as previously the identity of these interests operated in practice through competition."²⁶

Crisis theory based on factor share movements is indeed a "class struggle" theory, since in it the class struggle determines the relative shares. For Ricardo, this struggle was conducted between the bourgeoisie and the landlords over the distribution of the surplus between industrial profit and ground rent. This was a reflection of the actual state of development of capitalist society at the time, newly emerged from feudalism and still fighting off the remains of that system and the lingering claims of the old, feudal ruling class; a society not yet so fully developed as to have a clearly defined proletariat or the maturity of the contradictions of production which lead to capitalist crisis. In fact when Ricardo wrote (before 1825), there had not yet been a crisis of capitalism in the modern sense.

Modern crisis theory based on factor shares also presents a "class struggle" approach, based on the contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the working class, which is the decisive class contradiction in modern society. But this theory divorces class struggle from its material foundation. It is quite true and well known that "The history of all hitherto existing society is the

²⁵ Engels, *Anti-Duhring*, p. 202.

²⁶ Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 3, p. 253.

history of class struggles."²⁷ Class struggle is the *motive force* of history, but class struggle itself has its origin and explanation in the contradictions of production. Without this material foundation, we have an idealist theory in which class struggle itself becomes only the subjective battle of the conflicting *wills* of the opposing classes, who are opposed only because each wants what the other has (the battle over distribution).

This leaves the problem to be resolved in one of three ways: 1) by simple force; 2) as a moral question of justice, or "fair share;" 3) on the pragmatic basis of what seems to work, trying to find that distribution which simultaneously satisfies at least the minimum requirements of the capitalists for profit and at least the minimum demands of labor for a share of their product. None of this can possibly shed any light on the necessities which bind the conflicting classes, the laws of capitalism which "operate independent of man's will" (*any and all wills*) and which necessarily and inevitably lead to crisis, war and proletarian revolution.

We have already seen that such an idealist approach leads to voluntarism by allowing, in theory, great freedom on the part of the bourgeoisie. The same is true if it is applied to the working class movement. In their main article we are analyzing, Boddy and Crotty have almost nothing to say about the tasks confronting the working class, limiting their (closing) remarks to:

"As a result of these real conflicts, American workers are likely to remain under dual attack. They will have to cope with attempts to introduce new methods of control and, at the same time, continue to face the ravages of the business cycle."²⁸

Many people have drawn the conclusion that Boddy/Crotty say that "the workers cause the crisis," by fighting for improved wages and conditions and this was, in fact, the thrust of one of the few published criticisms of the Boddy/Crotty thesis.²⁹ Despite their conclusion that "the decline in the profit rate is thus direct-

²⁷ Marx and Engels, Manifesto of the Communist Party, Foreign Language Press, Peking, p. 30.

²⁸ Boddy/Crotty, *op. cit.*, p. 17

²⁹ Sherman, Howard, Monthly Review, March 1976. Although he criticizes Boddy/Crotty, Sherman basically falls into the same error by insisting that the crisis and especially inflation is caused by the ability of the monopoly capitalists simply to raise prices in the face of rising wages. He thereby takes the burden of causing the crisis off the actions of the working class, whom Sherman feels obliged to "defend," and places the responsibility for the crisis on the policies and power of the bourgeoisie, whom he feels obliged to attack. Sherman never discussed the conditions of production that lead to crisis.

ly attributable to labor 'problems,'"³⁰ Boddy and Crotty do not place any responsibility (or purpose) for "blaming" the workers. They simply say that workers can reasonably and righteously be expected to fight for their interests, and that the battle over wages and conditions of employment in fact has an effect of precipitating a crisis. If this indicates that capitalism can't simultaneously satisfy the interests of capital and labor, then the conclusion must be that the workers should overthrow capitalism.

But in the absence of a materialist understanding of the conditions which actually sharpen the class struggle and lead to revolution, this is only a pious wish, a fond sentiment which is absolutely incapable of translation into a political program which has the potential of achieving proletarian revolution. Idealism in political economy leads necessarily to idealism in politics, when one is considering the politics of the bourgeoisie or the movement of the working class.

Boddy and Crotty do not say much themselves about strategy for the working class. But others who elaborate their political economy for that purpose do, and it is already abundantly clear where this line leads. It says that the main question in the mind of the bourgeoisie is to oppose the institution of fascism, the terroristic dictatorship of the bourgeoisie over the working class. This view of the fascist danger manifests itself as an almost morbid obsession with bourgeois desires to "plan" the economy with an interpretation of the real attacks on unions in that text.

As far as the tasks of the working class in this view, people say they are to oppose fascism and economically to intensify the crisis by fighting even harder to advance their share of the output, thereby heightening the contradictions to the point of economic collapse (always mindful to prevent fascism), at which time the working class will be able to take state power. One of the most outrageous and most obviously anti-working class proposals on this theme (completely disavowed by Boddy and Crotty) is utterly consistent with their political economy, if not their personal preferences) is the "zero work movement," which is the highest and most revolutionary demand of the working class to be "Income Without Jobs"! In this way, by adding to the and unemployment compensation payments, the working class can drive up their share of the output by taking these resources away from capital, all the more sharply if these payments come in exchange for doing no work, and therefore create a surplus value at all for the capitalists to share in even to the furthest degree. That such a line is idealist hardly needs to be pointed out.

³⁰ Boddy/Crotty, *loc. cit.*, p. 8.

history of class struggles.”²⁷ Class struggle is the *motive force* of history, but class struggle itself has its origin and explanation in the contradictions of production. Without this material foundation, we have an idealist theory in which class struggle itself becomes only the subjective battle of the conflicting *wills* of the opposing classes, who are opposed only because each wants what the other has (the battle over distribution).

This leaves the problem to be resolved in one of three ways: 1) by simple force; 2) as a moral question of justice, or “fair share;” 3) on the pragmatic basis of what seems to work, trying to find that distribution which simultaneously satisfies at least the minimum requirements of the capitalists for profit and at least the minimum demands of labor for a share of their product. None of this can possibly shed any light on the necessities which bind the conflicting classes, the laws of capitalism which “operate independent of man’s will” (*any and all wills*) and which necessarily and inevitably lead to crisis, war and proletarian revolution.

We have already seen that such an idealist approach leads to voluntarism by allowing, in theory, great freedom on the part of the bourgeoisie. The same is true if it is applied to the working class movement. In their main article we are analyzing, Boddy and Crotty have almost nothing to say about the tasks confronting the working class, limiting their (closing) remarks to:

“As a result of these real conflicts, American workers are likely to remain under dual attack. They will have to cope with attempts to introduce new methods of control and, at the same time, continue to face the ravages of the business cycle.”²⁸

Many people have drawn the conclusion that Boddy/Crotty say that “the workers cause the crisis,” by fighting for improved wages and conditions and this was, in fact, the thrust of one of the few published criticisms of the Boddy/Crotty thesis.²⁹ Despite their conclusion that “the decline in the profit rate is thus direct-

²⁷ Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Foreign Language Press, Peking, p. 30.

²⁸ Boddy/Crotty, *op. cit.*, p. 17

²⁹ Sherman, Howard, *Monthly Review*, March 1976. Although he criticizes Boddy/Crotty, Sherman basically falls into the same error by insisting that the crisis and especially inflation is caused by the ability of the monopoly capitalists simply to raise prices in the face of rising wages. He thereby takes the burden of causing the crisis off the actions of the working class, whom Sherman feels obliged to “defend,” and places the responsibility for the crisis on the policies and power of the bourgeoisie, whom he feels obliged to attack. Sherman never discussed the conditions of production that lead to crisis.

ly attributable to labor ‘problems,’ ”³⁰ Boddy and Crotty disown any responsibility (or purpose) for “blaming” the workers. They simply say that workers can reasonably and righteously be expected to fight for their interests, and that the battle over wages and conditions of employment in fact has an effect of precipitating crisis. If this indicates that capitalism can’t simultaneously satisfy the interests of capital and labor, then the conclusion must be that the workers should overthrow capitalism.

But in the absence of a materialist understanding of the contradictions which actually sharpen the class struggle and lead to revolution, this is only a pious wish, a fond sentiment which is absolutely incapable of translation into a political program which has the potential of achieving proletarian revolution. Idealism in political economy leads necessarily to idealism in politics, whether one is considering the politics of the bourgeoisie or the movement of the working class.

Boddy and Crotty do not say much themselves about strategy for the working class. But others who elaborate their political economy for that purpose do, and it is already abundantly clear where this line leads. It says that the main question in fighting the bourgeoisie is to oppose the institution of fascism, the open terroristic dictatorship of the bourgeoisie over the working class. This view of the fascist danger manifests itself as an almost morbid obsession with bourgeois desires to “plan” the economy, and with an interpretation of the real attacks on unions in this context.

As far as the tasks of the working class in this view, politically they are to oppose fascism and economically to intensify the crisis by fighting even harder to advance their share of the product, thereby heightening the contradictions to the point of economic collapse (always mindful to prevent fascism), at which time the working class will be able to take state power. One of the most outrageous and most obviously anti-working class variations on this theme (completely disavowed by Boddy and Crotty, but utterly consistent with their political economy, if not their personal preferences) is the “zero work movement,” which upholds the highest and most revolutionary demand of the working class to be “Income Without Jobs”! In this way, by adding to welfare and unemployment compensation payments, the working class can drive up their share of the output by taking these resources away from capital, all the more sharply if these payments can come in exchange for doing no work, and therefore creating no surplus value at all for the capitalists to share in even to the slightest degree. That such a line is idealist hardly needs to be pointed out.

³⁰ Boddy/Crotty, *loc. cit.*, p. 8.

Behind the analysis that sees crisis arising out of the battle over factor shares lies a deep-seated political trend which is also present in the workers' movement—economism. All views of crisis based on distribution present the economic battle as the highest and most revolutionary form of class struggle, and make it the essential question for the working class to address in building its movement. The political struggle, to the extent that it is recognized, is immediately tied to and limited to questions of economic policy of the state.

Theories of crisis based on distribution make the central question the terms of the sale of labor power, instead of the abolition of the production relations in which the workers are forced to sell their labor power. In presenting the contradiction of capitalism as one of distribution, these theories blur the distinctions between the working class and the petty bourgeoisie by saying that the employed petty bourgeoisie (teachers, social workers, an increasing number of doctors and lawyers, etc.) suffer the same pressure of reduced wages as the working class. It is often still argued that these petty bourgeois strata are in fact part of the working class, simply because they employ no one, but "sell their labor power, just like workers." Such a conclusion can only arise by liquidating value relations and basic *social* relations and conditions as they arise out of capitalism *as a system of production*.

Blurring the real distinctions between the working class and the petty bourgeoisie also results in a view that the petty bourgeoisie can persist in revolutionary struggle independent of the working class, and can even lead that struggle to a successful overthrow of capitalism. Again, in separating crisis from the fundamental contradiction between socialized production and private appropriation, the materialist basis for waging a political struggle to end the conditions and eliminate the source of crisis is denied, along with the ability to grasp who it is that is the gravedigger of capitalism—why the working class, representing social production, is the only class which can lead the battle to overthrow capitalist relations, and why it is the only class that can organize new relations of production, fully social, which conform to the actual character of the productive forces.

The economic analysis which presents crisis as growing out of distribution not only limits the working class struggle to the economic sphere, but liquidates the material basis of the united front under proletarian leadership by blurring the distinctions between the working class and the petty bourgeoisie. The petty bourgeoisie does have real contradictions with the monopoly capitalists, which are the basis for the working class uniting with it, but the working class must also take into account the vacillation and fear that characterizes the petty bourgeoisie, characteristics which arise from their particular place in capitalist production. As the *Pro-*

gramme of the RCP says, there is the

"need and the ability of the working class to win over as much of the petty bourgeoisie as possible, and neutralize those petty bourgeois forces that cannot be won over, by exposing the bourgeoisie as the source of the suffering of the people, and building the most powerful struggle against it. But in order to do this the proletariat must bring forward its revolutionary outlook, build its own strength as the main force in the struggle against the bourgeoisie, and carry this struggle through to make revolution. The more resolutely the proletariat fights for its revolutionary interests as a class, the broader the sections of the petty bourgeoisie it will be able to win over."³¹

In the absence of a materialist understanding of the workings of the law of value and the way all of society is unfolding around the fundamental contradiction rooted in *production*, the working class can never comprehend its historical tasks, and can never grasp the actual laws governing the development of every sphere of society and ultimately determining the social role of each class; without this it cannot analyze the class interests involved and lead all sections of the people in a united, all-round revolutionary assault on the bourgeoisie.

III

Marx presents crisis as an integral and necessary part of capitalist production and accumulation. It is the very drive for profit, and the fact that profit arises from the exploitation of the working class, that forces crisis upon capitalist society; crisis "must be regarded as the real concentration and forcible adjustment of all the contradictions of bourgeois economy."³²

Capitalist production is fundamentally the production of value, but more than that the production of *surplus value* which is appropriated by the capitalists, turned into capital, and thrown back into the production of value and surplus value on a larger scale. Value, in the form of commodity products, is created by the working class socially in the course of production. But the value is appropriated privately by capitalists, first in the fact that the capitalists own the products as they are produced, because they own the means of production; and flowing from this, the capitalist owns

³¹ Programme of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, pp. 86-87.

³² Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, Part 2, p. 510. See also "Commodities, Capitalism, Class Divisions—And Their Abolition with the Achievement of Communism" in *The Communist*, Vol. 1, No. 1, October 1976.

the money received from the sale of the products. Social production on the one hand; private appropriation on the other: this is the fundamental contradiction of capitalist society, including the eruption of periodic crises.

To continue to make profit, the capitalist must find ways to exploit the working class more intensely, and to compete more effectively with all the other capitalists to be able to appropriate for himself the largest possible share of the total surplus value of society in the form of money profit. Each capitalist is driven to organize production more efficiently, to reduce costs, to increase the productivity of labor. These tasks are accomplished through a variety of means, chief among which are the refinement of the division of labor and the introduction of ever more modern machinery. With this,

“ . . . more raw material is worked up in the same time, and, therefore, a greater mass of raw materials and auxiliary substances enter into the labor process. That is the consequence of the increasing productivity of labor this growth in the mass of the means of production as compared with the mass of the labor-power that vivifies them, is reflected in its value composition [the organic composition of capital—M.F.Z.] by the increase of the constant constituent of capital at the expense of the variable constituent.”³³

The requirements of commodity production, the production of value and surplus value, compel increases in the productivity of labor, advances in the productive forces, and an inescapable resulting increase in the organic composition of capital.

These advances in productivity also influence the rate of surplus value, or rate of exploitation, by tending to reduce the necessary labor time of production of labor power (of the necessities of life), thereby lowering its value and increasing the rate of exploitation, the ratio of unpaid to paid labor. But, at the same time, greater productivity of labor resulting from an increase in the organic composition of capital means that fewer workers are needed to set in motion a capital of a given size. Therefore, while the rate of exploitation is rising on a given outlay of variable capital (which tends to offset the decline in the rate of profit forced by a higher organic composition of capital), a given total outlay of capital involves relatively less variable capital (hires less workers) and so the overall offsetting effect of greater exploitation is reduced because a capital of a given size involves fewer workers to exploit.

³³ Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, p. 622.

Marx is very clear in pointing out that,

“ . . . the rate of surplus value, at the same, or even a rising degree of labor exploitation, is represented by a continually falling general rate of profit . . . The progressive tendency of the general rate of profit to fall is, therefore, just an expression peculiar to the capitalist mode of production of the progressive development of the social productivity of labor.”³⁴

It is this tendency of the rate of profit to fall, growing out of capitalist production, which “breeds overproduction, speculation, crises and surplus capital alongside surplus population.”³⁵ The crisis itself, however, is a crisis of overproduction, a crisis brought on by the fact that the anarchic competition of each capitalist against all others drives each to expand production without regard to the limits capitalist production relations as a whole must place on the possibility of realizing the surplus as money profit (by selling the products). Capitalist production continuously drives to expand to the limits of the productive forces, and to increase those forces so that even more capital can be accumulated, but this profit-seeking push to expansion comes into conflict with the limits of profit itself. And, as seen before these limits are erected by the limitation of the wages of the working class necessary for capital's self-expansion—for the accumulation of profit—and by the use of less and less variable capital in relation to the total capital needed to facilitate expanding production. This is why Marx says:

“It is the unconditional development of the productive forces and therefore mass production on the basis of a mass of producers who are confined within the bounds of necessary means of subsistence on the one hand, and, on the other, the barrier set up by the capitalists' profit, which [forms] the basis of modern overproduction.”³⁶

There is no way that modern crises can be understood without the labor theory of value. The apparent criminal insanity of overproduction, a “crisis of superabundance” as Engels puts it, becomes entirely understandable once we recognize that the abundant, overproduced products are not just products, use values, but are capital itself. “Overproduction of capital, not of individual commodities—although overproduction of capital always includes

³⁴ Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 3, p. 213.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

³⁶ Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, Part 2, p. 528.

overproduction of commodities—is therefore simply overaccumulation of capital,” standing at one pole, with an “unemployed worker population at the other.”³⁷

The crisis continues until the conditions of profitability are restored, until enough of the overproduced capital is “slaughtered” so that accumulation can proceed again. This destruction of values takes the form of selling commodities below their value, the bankruptcy of weaker capitalists and the absorption of their facilities at cut-rate prices by the remaining capitalists, and the absolute abandonment of some productive facilities so that they no longer share at all in the formation of the general rate of profit. In short, the conditions of profitability are “restored under all circumstances through the withdrawal or even the destruction of more or less capital.”³⁸

Once the conditions of accumulation are restored,

“. . . production and exchange gradually begin to move again. By degrees the pace quickens; it becomes a trot; the industrial trot passes into a gallop, and the gallop in turn passes into the headlong onrush of a complete industrial, commercial, credit and speculative steeplechase, only to land again in the end, after the most breakneck jumps—in the ditch.”³⁹

And so capitalism goes, from crisis to crisis. But this is not a simple circular repetition, as Marx and Engels explain in the *Communist Manifesto*:

“And how does the bourgeoisie get over these crises? On the one hand by enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces; on the other by the conquest of new markets, and by the more thorough exploitation of the old ones. That is to say, by paving the way for more extensive and more destructive crises, and by diminishing the means whereby crises are prevented.”⁴⁰

Each crisis ends with the further concentration of capital and more thorough exploitation of labor, by an intensification of the fundamental contradiction of capitalism. The accumulation of capital which can then continue in the subsequent boom only leads to further declines in the rate of profit, more rapid overproduction, more intense competition to avoid the losses, and more

³⁷ Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 3, p. 251.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 253.

³⁹ Engels, *Anti-Duhring*, p. 302.

⁴⁰ Marx, Engels, *Communist Manifesto*, Foreign Language Press, Peking, p. 38.

dislocation and difficulty in the repeated necessity of slaughtering off the excess capital.

Marx powerfully summarized this:

“Capitalist production seeks continually to overcome” these immanent barriers, but overcomes them only by means which again place these barriers in its way and on a more formidable scale.

“The *real barrier* of capitalist production is *capital itself*. It is that capital and its self-expansion appear as the starting and the closing point, the motive and the purpose of production; that production is only production for *capital* and not vice versa, the means of production are not mere means for the constant expansion of the living process of the *society* of producers. The limits within which the preservation and self-expansion of the value of capital resting on the expropriation and pauperization of the great mass of producers can alone move—these limits come continually into conflict with the methods of production employed by capital for its purposes, which drive toward unlimited extension of production, towards production as an end in itself, towards unconditional development of the social productivity of labor. The means—unconditional development of the productive forces of society—comes continually into conflict with the limited purpose, the self-expansion of the existing capital. The capitalist mode of production is, for this reason, a historical means of developing the material forces of production and creating an appropriate world-market and is, at the same time, a continual conflict between this its historical task and its own corresponding relations of social production.”⁴¹

It is in periods of crisis, and wars that often accompany them, that the contradictions of capitalism stand out the most sharply, and when the working class and the masses of people feel most urgently the need to find some other way to live. The capitalists, themselves bound by the laws of capital, seek to get out of the crisis at each others’ expense, and overall at the expense of the working class and the masses of people. The intense competition among the ruling class shows itself in a host of “plans” for more or less or different government activity, none of which can touch the fundamental contradiction underlying the crisis and general decay of capitalism—social production held back by private appropriation, embodied in the system of capitalist commodity production.

⁴¹ Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 3, p. 250.

For the working class and all revolutionary minded people, it is essential to have a materialist analysis of this situation. Only then will it be possible to avoid falling into one or another scheme which leaves intact the heart of the problem. Only then will it be possible to lead the struggle in the only successful direction, towards the revolutionary abolition of capitalist relations of production, a task which is made both possible and necessary by capitalist accumulation itself.

WVO: Undaunted Dogma from Puffed-Up Charlatans

OWEN NATHA

In the January 1977 issue of *Revolution* an article was published, "Theoretical Struggle Crucial Part of Working Class Movement," which stressed the importance of the theoretical struggle—noting that, along with the economic and political, it is one of the three forms of the working class movement. In that article we identified the most important aspects of the theoretical struggle at this time and emphasized the importance now of studying theory "in its own right," while also noting that "In an *overall sense* studying theory with particular problems in mind and applying it to solve concrete questions posing themselves in the actual movement of the working class and masses is the way in which Party members and others will *most* deepen their grasp of theory and their ability to apply it in a living way."

Recently it has come to our attention that a group, the "Workers Viewpoint Organization" (WVO), has, in the January 1977 issue of its newspaper, written something in response to the *Revolution* article, entitled "RCP Discovers 'Theory In Its Own Right.'" Fundamentally, there is nothing new and in one sense nothing worthy of comment in this WVO sermon. WVO is one of a number of groupings that formed something calling itself the "revolutionary wing"—before this "wing" further fractured itself, Trotskyite-like, into opposing splinters.

For some time the characteristic of these groupings, before, during and after they formed themselves into a "wing," has been their vulgarization of Marxist theory, attempting to reduce it to a religious dogma, and their insistence that the "central task" of Marxist-Leninists in this country has been for many years and remains to this day to take part in this perversion of Marxism and the squabble over whose perversions represent ideological purity. Those who, like the RCP and the Revolutionary Union (RU)—which played the major part in the formation of the RCP—have refused to indulge in this, but have followed the path of applying Marxism to the actual situation in the U.S., have been consistently attacked by this "wing" and its various splinters as "belittling the role of theory." WVO has, in particular, tried to stick the label of "pragmatist" on the RCP—an attempt they repeat, with customary crudeness, in this recent article.

We have, in general, not occupied ourselves with answering

these attacks since, by and large, the line these groupings put forward has little influence on the working class in this country, including the most advanced workers, who recognize the importance of revolutionary theory. But, as pointed out in the *Revolution* article, not only is it true that “dogmatism mainly characterizes a number of opportunist so-called ‘communist’ groupings,” among which is the WVO, but also “dogmatism has some influence within the Party itself,” even though “within the Party empiricism now represents a greater error than dogmatism.” And while it may have little influence in the working class movement now, it would be empiricist to say that there are no circumstances under which the kind of dogmatism represented by WVO could exert more influence.

Further, in the recent past, the WVO has become something of a “lightning rod,” attracting various dogmatist forces—though, of course, the storms they are a pole in are not the storms of mass struggle but a “tempest in a teapot” of sectarian bickering. Still, some honest forces may be temporarily attracted to this dogmatic pole—especially those who have only recently come to recognize the importance of revolutionary theory, either because they are new to the revolutionary movement, or because, in some cases, they have belonged for some time to that part of the movement that has, in fact, denied or seriously downgraded the role of theory and have run smack up against the limitations of this line. For these varying reasons it is timely and productive now to examine the line of a group like the WVO, to use it as a teacher by negative example, and in the process deepen the understanding of Party members and others of the correct line, including specifically the correct, Marxist understanding of the role of theory and its relation to the practical movement of the working class.

WVO'S NEGATIVE EXAMPLE

It is impossible and unnecessary, of course, to analyze every deviation of such a group; and so we are concentrating on the main points which characterize, in particularly sharp form, their main features. In this article, which will serve as a foundation for such an analysis, we are concentrating specifically on the question of the role of theory and the Marxist theory of knowledge, using the WVO reply to our article on the theoretical struggle as a centerpiece. In another article, which follows, we will examine other aspects of WVO's corruption of Marxism, in terms of its general line as well as its opportunist practice—both “left” and right—which flows from and reflects this line.

Let's turn then to the WVO article attacking the RCP on the question of the theoretical struggle. The contention of this arti-

cle is that the RCP and some others are “inching their way toward one aspect or another of the correct Marxist line of the Workers Viewpoint Organization. Incapable of providing leadership to the workers' and national movements,” the RCP, among others, says WVO, “must look to the only organization that can provide that leadership and cop the lines that WVO has held for years in the struggle.” In particular WVO claims that the RCP is only “now” recognizing the importance of theory and the theoretical struggle. But, the WVO sternly warns, “Tailing after the WVO isn't going to drag you out of the marsh, RCP, it only underlines how deeply into the marsh you've sunk.”

As you can see, the WVO has quite a high opinion of itself. It proclaims itself “the only organization” that properly upholds the role of Marxist theory—and the correct line in general—and preaches hell and damnation not only to those it sees as openly opposing WVO but even to those who, WVO asserts, are now tailing after it—too late, alas, to win salvation. WVO wants to play the Pope, but, as we shall see, an examination of its doctrine and antics reveals that it is not even capable of that—it is more like an altarboy imitating the Pope.

But with all its puffery, the basic question remains, what is the line of the WVO and is that line actually the “correct Marxist line” or, in fact, opportunism totally opposed to Marxism? In particular, what is the basis for its claim that the RCP is “pragmatist” while the WVO properly handles the role of theory?

FORMATION OF THE RCP

Boiled down to its essence, the basis of their whole argument is that the way in which the RCP itself was formed was pragmatist—by putting emphasis on summing up the experience that the RU and others gained over a number of years in applying Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought to the concrete situation in the U.S., in the mass movements, especially of the workers, but also among other sections of the people. Carrying out this summation and ideological struggle over what were the lessons of this pre-Party period, and applying Marxism specifically to the question of developing a political programme for the Party in this country—this was the method by which the RCP was founded. And, for this period of summation and struggle along the lines just summarized, theory was principal over practice.

According to the WVO the clue to the whole of the RCP's pragmatism is the use of the word “experience.” Really, it is a very simple argument—the formation of the RCP was based on experience, therefore it is empiricist, pragmatist. What is distorted is that the basis for forming the RCP as the Party of the work-

ing class in the U.S. was the *summation* of experience. And, as was repeatedly pointed out during the process of forming the Party, the tool, the guide to be used in this summation was exactly the science of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought, which is itself the summation of the practice, or experience, of mankind in three great struggles—the class struggle, the struggle for production and scientific experimentation.

But WVO has consistently insisted on pitting experience *against* the scientific summation of this experience—or, simply put, to pit practice against theory—instead of linking the two. This is clearly shown in the WVO's recent article where it repeats a statement it made in September 1974: "In the final analysis, the point in question here is whether Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought is the basis of our party program, or 'experience' is the basis of our program." (emphasis added) According to Mao Tsetung, "Knowledge begins with experience—this is the materialism of the theory of knowledge," and "Anyone who thinks that rational knowledge need not be derived from perceptual knowledge is an idealist." (*On Practice*) This fits WVO perfectly.

No doubt WVO will howl at this point that this argument itself is a *further* example of empiricism—and deliberate deceit, as well—for Mao Tsetung also emphasizes in *On Practice* that "one cannot have direct experience of everything; as a matter of fact, most of our knowledge comes from indirect experience, for example, all knowledge from past times and foreign lands." But Marxism is precisely the *summation* of mankind's experience to date, a synthesis of this experience into general laws. This does not help WVO at all—it does not at all strengthen their argument that the RU was concerned only with "its own experience"—but only takes us back to the point made earlier: that it was correct to form the Party in this country on the basis of *summing up, through the application of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought*, the experience gained by revolutionaries in applying this science to the struggle in this country in the previous period.

Contort—and distort—as it will, WVO cannot get away from the fact that it is treating Marxism as a dogma divorced from reality—not a science based on practice and serving as a guide to practice on a higher level, but an Idea that emerges out of the minds of "geniuses." In short, WVO, whenever it puts forth its own position and attacks others, cannot help but reveal its own idealism.

Another argument of WVO, another of its bases for attacking the RCP as pragmatist, is WVO's insistence that, during the entire pre-Party period in the recent U.S. revolutionary movement, Party-building must be the central task, and that central to this is the proposition that all during the pre-Party period theory must

be made principal over practice. The RU was—and the RCP is—pragmatist, declares WVO, because the RU said that only "for a brief period" was forming the Party the central task and was the *theory* principal over practice. To make its case on this point WVO openly combines metaphysics with its idealism.

CONDITIONS DURING PRE-PARTY PERIOD

The RU, after its formation almost ten years ago, while stressing the importance of forming the Party as soon as possible, did not take the position that Party-building was the central task for the entire period until the Party was formed. This was based on a concrete analysis of the situation in the U.S. at that time and the steps that were clearly indicated in order to carry out the task of building a Party that would actually be the advanced detachment of the working class and not a petty bourgeois sect detached *from* the working class practically and ideologically.

With the degeneration of the CP and of early attempts to form a new, genuine Party of the working class in this country, for example, Progressive Labor Party (PL), much confusion resulted in the midst of a mass upsurge of struggle—especially on the part of Black people and other oppressed nationalities, youth, students, women and other movements, and a beginning swell of rank and file resistance in the working class. In this situation the forming of the Party could not be accomplished either through declaring it, or through concentration on studying theory and waging ideological struggle to establish the correct line as the main task. In fact, the RU recognized the importance of this task—*theoretical work and ideological struggle*—but also recognized that it could not, from the start, and consistently during the whole pre-Party period, be made the main task.

WVO seizes on this, too, as "proof" of the RU's "belittling of the role of theory." In their minds the confusion amidst a tremendous mass upsurge, with no clear center of leadership, meant that the role of theory was all the more clearly established as central. Isn't that logical—there is lots of practice, mass struggle, but no clear pole of leadership to guide that practice; therefore, studying theory to establish the basis for determining the correct line to lead the struggle obviously must be the main task. Yes, this is logic, of a kind—it is *bourgeois* logic, metaphysics, as opposed to dialectics. And it is idealism, as opposed to materialism.

Why? Because it fails to recognize the basic principle that the correct line must be developed and demonstrated in practice. During this period—roughly the late '60s and early '70s—a number of different forces developed, including the RU, which said that they based themselves on Marxism-Leninism, in opposition to revisionism and Trotskyism. All of these stated agreement on

basic questions, such as the need for the Party and the dictatorship of the proletariat. But they disagreed on a number of questions specifically related to the U.S.—whether in this country the united front is merely a tactic or the strategy for revolution, how to analyze the national question, woman question, etc.

Studying theory and carrying out ideological struggle, though very important, was not then the key link to resolving these questions—*applying* Marxism-Leninism to the actual struggles and summing this up was the key link. And, in fact, among these different forces there were two general trends: toward more unity based on a deeper development and understanding of the correct line, especially where they persevered in the process of concretely applying Marxism; and toward splitting, splintering and degeneration, where they refused to take up the task of applying revolutionary theory to the mass movement or—after initial attempts to carry out this task—retreated either into dogmatism and sectarianism and/or open reformism.

The RU, in fact, in *its* formation, did, “for a brief period”—there is that damning phrase again!—make theory principal. That is, in its formation, it first paid most attention to grounding itself in the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought and to developing the foundation of a correct line for making revolution in the U.S. through an application of that science to the concrete situation in the U.S.—the recognition of the working class, especially the industrial proletariat, as the main and leading force in the revolution, the need for a Party of the proletariat to act as its vanguard, the dictatorship of the proletariat and ultimately communism as the aim of the struggle, the determination of the united front as the basic strategy for revolution, the analysis of the Black national question and others, as well as the exposure of the revisionism of the CP, Trotskyism, anarchism and other erroneous and opportunist trends.

Having done this, the RU then correctly laid stress on linking up with the actual mass struggles in the U.S.—especially of the working class—while carrying out theoretical work and ideological struggle as an important but *secondary* task for a certain period. This line was summed up in the formulation that the central task for that period was “to build the struggle, consciousness and revolutionary unity of the working class and develop its leadership in the anti-imperialist struggle.”

It was exactly because this line was carried out, and experience—that terrible word again!—accumulated in this way, that the basis for establishing the Party was formed—both deeper roots among the masses, especially masses of workers, and a deeper understanding of how the universal principles of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought and the general line for the U.S. revolution—for example, the united front strategy—must be applied

to develop the actual struggle in the U.S. Then by applying Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought and carrying on ideological struggle to sum up that experience—and making theory principal in that sense for a certain relatively brief period—the Party, the RCP, was in fact formed on the basis of a correct line, as concretized in the Party’s Programme.

All of this was an outrage to those who insisted on making the study of theory principal all along. In fact there were such sects in the ’60s, too, and had their line won out there would have been not progress but retrogression in understanding the basic principles of Marxism—for such principles turn into dry dogma when divorced from practice—let alone in establishing the practical and theoretical basis for forming the Party. All of this is, of course, still an outrage to those who have insisted in recent years, and continue to insist, on making the “study of theory” principal as the basis for forming a “party,” when the Party has already been formed! To them the key thing all along has been to study theory and wage struggle in order, first of all, to do what?—to establish the fact that theory is principal over practice during this period!

WVO DISCOVERS “PROOF”

To such groups, like WVO, who do not base themselves on but oppose the correct, Marxist method of linking theory with practice, and who completely misunderstand and distort the relation between the two, the ~~line~~ line of the RU in the past, and the RCP today, is nothing but “practice-practice-practice.” And WVO thinks it has “proof” of this, from the RCP itself. They cite the statement in the January 1977 *Revolution* article that empiricism now represents a greater error than dogmatism in the Party. To them this means that the RCP is finally admitting that *its line* is based on empiricism, that the RCP is empiricist.

What is involved here, among other things, is at least a failure to grasp the particularity of contradiction. The question posed and answered in the *Revolution* article is which is principal at this time within the RCP, empiricism or dogmatism? As to the question, which is principal, empiricism (or dogmatism) on the one hand, or *Marxism* on the other, the answer is Marxism. In other words, we recognize that within the Party, even though its line is fundamentally correct, there are errors and we work to root them out, recognizing also that this is a protracted process. We will accept and welcome criticism from others that helps us identify and struggle against any such errors.

But the WVO’s attempt to jump on this recognition of empiricist errors in order to say, “See, we were right all along, you are and have been empiricist and now even you have to admit it,” is

like the Trotskyites who seize on the self-criticism of shortcomings in socialist countries to say, "See, we were right all along, there is no socialism there!" For sects like WVO to seize on our examination of our errors—specifically empiricist errors—to try to promote their own opportunist dogma, is like a child-beater, seizing on a parent's admission that in some cases he has been too lenient with his kids, to promote child-beating.

WVO flies into a frenzy at the statement in the *Revolution* article that the tendency toward pragmatism "has some soil to grow in our Party exactly because our Party, from its very foundation, while carrying out much theoretical work and ideological struggle has correctly laid stress on the need to link up with and sink roots in the practical struggle of the working class and masses of people." WVO leaves out the words indicated in bold type in a cheap attempt to strengthen their case.

To WVO this very stress on linking up with mass struggles is the historical basis of the RCP's "pragmatist line." To them, to stress practice, and specifically to stress the accumulation and summation of practice as a precondition for the formation of the Party, to make the task of linking up with the practical movements, especially of the working class, principal at any time before the Party has been formed in this country, is "pragmatism." What is revealed here is not the RCP's "pragmatism," but the utter dogmatism of groups like WVO, which is made clearer by the actual process of building the Party summarized earlier.

In fact, despite its proclamations and protestations, WVO is the one that is forced to "cop"—or pay lip service—to aspects of the correct line, though they no sooner do so than they pervert it. In their article they state, "There was universal agreement to deepen our roots among the masses. The question was how." And their answer, which is supplied in their sentence above the one just quoted, turns back on itself in a further display of metaphysical acrobatics: "the key link at that time to solve the burning questions (what is to be done) was to accept the necessity of the role of Marxist theory—as a guide, to our direction, our orientation, to lead the masses."

And how long should people have gone on with the process of "accepting" this necessity, before they could begin the process of applying theory? If ever there was an example of turning theory into a "thing for itself" here it is! The fact is that the RU had long since "accepted" this necessity and set out to apply theory, while the WVO (or its predecessor, the Asian Study Group) apparently was still caught up in the struggle to "accept" it. And WVO wants to hold itself up as the vanguard force in this country in regard to Marxist theory?! At best, by their own wooden logic, they were, at one time, in the rearward within the Marxist movement—and now they are not in it at all.

To be ignorant is one thing—and ignorance can be transformed into knowledge by taking part in the process of changing the world, and using Marxism as a guide to this. But to raise ignorance to a principle, to make a virtue of it, to grow arrogant in direct relation to this ignorance, and to insist that everything stop until, through self-cultivation, struggling to "accept" theory, one has overcome his own ignorance, this is both self-defeating and sabotage of the revolutionary movement. To say, under the conditions that existed during most of the pre-Party period (and which exist most of the time in general), that we cannot go into practice and make it principal because we don't know enough, is to reverse the dialectic by which both practice and theory proceed from the lower to the higher level. To pass this off as "Marxist theory" and promote it is an abomination of Marxism and is truly right, reactionary in essence.

WVO DEEPENS THEIR SELF-EXPOSURE

Stumbling along within its own idealism and metaphysics, WVO states in its article that the RCP "flips to abstract idealism" because we speak of the need to study Marxism "in its own right." They insist that there is "no such thing as theory 'in its own right.'" Here, in this part of its article, the fuller depth of WVO's opportunism—its idealism and metaphysics—is laid bare.

They complain that the RCP "now wants the workers to understand the mysteries of the universe," because the *Revolution* article states that, when speaking of Marxism as a guide to action, this must not be treated in a narrow sense, simply as a question of working out tactics in any particular struggle, but "in a sweeping, all-encompassing sense, a guide for the working class to grasp the laws governing the development of all things in nature and society..." WVO even goes so far as to insist that "There is no such large law and theory so general that by studying it we will know 'all laws' of 'mankind's struggle against nature,' etc." Apparently for WVO there is no dialectical materialism—certainly there is, on their part, no ability to grasp and apply it, but that does not deny its existence and validity as a law!

What are you saying here, WVO, that you don't believe that Marxism provides the basis for grasping the laws of development of all things in nature and society? Is not dialectical materialism a part, a fundamental component part, of Marxism? Is Mao Tse-tung wrong when he says that "Dialectical materialism is universally true because it is impossible for anyone to escape from its domain in practice"? Is Mao wrong when he states that Marxism "embraces but cannot replace the atomic and electronic theories in physics"? Is Engels wrong when he argues that "modern materialism is essentially dialectic, and no longer requires the assistance of

that sort of philosophy which, queen-like, pretended to rule the remaining mob of sciences. As soon as each special science is bound to make clear its position in the great totality of things and of our knowledge of things, a special science dealing with this totality is superfluous or unnecessary. That which still survives of all earlier philosophy is the science of thought and its laws—formal logic and dialectics. Everything else is subsumed in the positive science of Nature and history.” (*Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*)

Do not all these statements indicate that Marxism is indeed a “guide” to grasp the laws governing the development of all things in nature and society? Are there some things in nature and society whose motion and development contradict the laws of dialectical and historical materialism? Of course, different phenomena have their specific laws, but all these are encompassed by the basic laws of dialectical materialism—which is exactly why it is a guide to “grasping the laws of development of all things in nature and society.”

Does the working class not need to grasp these basic principles and apply them to specific phenomena in order to transform the world—both society and nature? Do you object to this? Apparently you do. What incredible narrowness and mutilation of Marxism—from the “leading theoreticians” of the U.S. revolutionary movement! Evidently your line is: “theory”—i.e., dogma—for yourselves, the “saviors,” the “initiated,” and ignorance for the masses.

This same narrowness and an unmistakable incapacity to see beyond the limitations of capitalist society is revealed in another way WVO responds to this passage in the *Revolution* article dealing with the role of Marxism as a guide to action. The *Revolution* article states that grasping Marxism enables the working class to “carry forward the world-historical task of wiping out capitalism and achieving communism and advancing mankind’s struggle against nature (for production) and its struggle to develop science (scientific experimentation) to a whole new stage.”

IMPERMISSIBLE TO SPEAK OF “MANKIND?”

In quoting part of this sentence, WVO places not one but three exclamation points behind the word “mankind’s.” Unless WVO objects to the use of “mankind” on the basis of bourgeois feminism—which can be assumed is not the case, giving WVO credit for making much greater deviations than that—then these exclamation points must indicate that WVO thinks that the world “proletariat” should have been substituted for the word “mankind.” In that case—and if that is not the case then there is no meaning to these “!!!”—WVO is totally incorrect and shows itself to be completely opposed to Marxism. First, do you think,

WVO, that under communism there will still be a proletariat, still be classes? That, indeed, would be a new addition and creative contribution to Marxist theory, since previously all Marxists have held that communism is exactly classless society.

Or do you think that it is incorrect to speak of “mankind’s” struggle for production and scientific experimentation now, because we still live in class society? Should we speak only of the proletariat—and other exploited classes in today’s world—carrying out this struggle? If that is what you mean, it only shows that you have not even grasped a fundamental principle of Marxism—that human society (“mankind”), in whatever form at whatever stage of development, is fundamentally an organized way that its members carry out the production and exchange of the material requirements of life; that corresponding to certain stages in the development of the productive forces, people enter into certain productive relations; and further, that the struggle for production (and scientific experimentation) has been carried out by mankind before classes developed and will be carried out, on a far higher plane, after classes have been eliminated.

Would you, WVO, also like to insert your three exclamation points behind the word “mankind” in the following statements by Mao and Engels?—“The epoch of world communism will be reached when all mankind voluntarily and consciously changes itself and the world” (Mao, *On Practice*); “...Marx discovered the law of development of human history: the simple fact, hitherto concealed by an overgrowth of ideology, that mankind must first of all eat, drink, have shelter and clothing, before it can pursue politics, science, art, religion, etc....” (Engels, *Speech at the Graveside of Karl Marx*).

To object to the use of the word “mankind” here is to object to basic principles of Marxism, and to historical materialism in particular. It is, as stated before, to be completely incapable of seeing beyond the frontiers of capitalism and class society, incapable of recognizing the material foundation of capitalism—and society generally—incapable of placing capitalism in its correct historical context. It is to be incapable of seeing that, as Marx wrote, “scientific analysis of the capitalist mode of production demonstrates the contrary, that it is a mode of production of a special kind, with specific historical features; that, like any other specific mode of production, it presupposes a given level of the social productive forces and their forms of development as its historical precondition: a precondition which is itself the historical result and product of a preceding process, and from which the new mode of production proceeds as its given basis....” (*Capital*, Vol. 3, p. 878)

In other words, it is because mankind has carried out the struggle for production (and scientific experimentation)—and also, of

course, that the class struggle has been carried forward to achieve higher forms of productive relations, and organization of society as a whole, further liberating the productive forces, from one stage of society to the next—that the material basis of capitalism exists and that capitalism can be superceded by a higher form of society, communism, which will combine a high level of development of the productive forces with social organization of production unfettered by class relations of exploitation, will be based on a high level of culture and consciousness in society as a whole and will open the way to tremendous and increasing development of the material and cultural level of society. WVO cannot see all this because their outlook is characterized by idealism and metaphysics, and they cannot see beyond the confines of capitalism.

WVO DISCOVERS "CONCRETE" THEORY

The philosophical foundation on which WVO's opportunism rests is its distortion of the correct, Marxist theory of knowledge and the relation between theory and practice. In its response to the *Revolution* article, WVO insists that "There is no such thing as proceeding from the abstract." This is by way of attacking the need to study theory "in its own right," as laid out in the *Revolution* article. Now it may seem strange that WVO, itself a devoted disciple of the school of theory "for its own sake"—which the *Revolution* article contrasts with "in its own right" (more on this shortly)—should attack the formulation "in its own right." But in fact, this is totally consistent with WVO's whole warped view.

To WVO, theory is itself "concrete," it cannot be "abstract." WVO tries to muddy the waters for a while with talk about not "proceeding from the abstract," (our emphasis) but then they get around to saying straight out that only pragmatists "treat it [theory] as abstractions." But theory is *exactly abstraction*—the abstraction and generalization of the material world, the synthesis in the mind of the objective world perceived through the senses. That theory is not abstraction would certainly come as a surprise to Mao and Lenin, for in *On Practice* Mao quotes Lenin as follows: "The abstraction of *matter*, of a *law* of nature, the abstraction of *value*, etc., in short, *all* scientific (correct, serious, not absurd) abstractions reflect nature more deeply, truly and *completely*." (emphasis, parenthesis, by Lenin)

Of course, as Lenin points out elsewhere, "truth is always concrete, never abstract." (*Collected Works*, Vol. 32, p. 94) What Lenin means here is that truth can only be arrived at by the method he termed the "living soul of Marxism"—the "concrete analysis of concrete conditions." But this in no way con-

tradicts the actual process of cognition which, as Lenin states, proceeds as follows, "from the concrete to the abstract...From living perception to abstract thought, *and from this to practice*,—such is the dialectical path of the cognition of *truth*, of the cognition of objective reality." (*Collected Works*, Vol. 38, p. 171) Again, clearly theory is exactly abstraction, and if this leap is not made—along with the leap back to practice—there is no way to arrive at truth, a correct understanding of the real world, and no way to change it in accordance with the laws governing it.

What Lenin and Mao emphasize and what WVO fails miserably to grasp, is that laws, theory, are developed by a *leap* in the process of cognition, from perceptual to rational. If theory were "concrete," as WVO presents it, then there would not be rational knowledge, theory would not and could not "reflect nature more deeply, truly, and *completely*," as Lenin insists. In short, there would be no difference between perceptual and rational knowledge. Everything would be both perceptual and rational at the same time, and therefore neither. This view is exactly the reactionary philosophical principle of "combining two into one," in place of the materialist dialectical principle of "one divides into two." And this is exactly the reactionary philosophy embraced by WVO.

In a number of his works, Mao stresses that the process of cognition involves *leaps*—first from perceptual to rational, from matter to *ideas*, and then *from ideas* back to matter—from rational knowledge back to the practice of changing the objective world. Those who do not understand this process, and specifically do not understand that theory and practice represent separate stages in the process of cognition, that there is a *leap* from the one to the other, do not understand how practice leads to the development of theory and in turn how theory leads back to practice on a higher level. Or, as Mao puts it, they fail to "comprehend that matter can be transformed into consciousness and consciousness into matter, although such leaps are phenomena of everyday life." Mao stresses that "it is therefore necessary to educate our comrades in the dialectical materialist theory of knowledge, so that they can orientate their thinking correctly, become good at investigation and study and at summing up experience"—"summing up experience"—Mao Tsetung, too, must be an empiricist! (See Mao's "Where Do Correct Ideas Come From?")

WVO does not understand all this, so they combine theory and practice, two-into-one, which is why they, on the one hand, attack the line of studying theory "in its own right"—as laws abstracted from particular phenomena of practical life—and on the other hand pervert the process of *applying* theory to practice. What this means for WVO and where it leads them can be seen in their statement that "general theory *itself is highly concrete*"

and, as some kind of amplification of this, "the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat [is] itself highly concrete." Perhaps this is why WVO, when it does deign to "intervene" in practical struggles, insists on passing out leaflets to the workers combining a laundry list of demands—most of them "good Ideas"—with stereotyped, dogmatic rhetoric about the Idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat—as for example in the strike of auto workers last year, when WVO, besides putting forward demands such as 15-minute wash up time, no layoffs, complete job security, etc., informed the auto workers that forming a "Bolshevik" type party was on the order of the day and "the Party must lead the battle for the six-hour day and carry out the immediate preparation for the dictatorship of the proletariat." Since to WVO Ideas and objective reality combine into one and all Ideas are "concrete," then the Idea of the "immediate preparation" for the "dictatorship of the proletariat" is just as concrete to strikers as their strike and its real demands. (These leaflets hit the ground in droves, prompting some to say that WVO was trying to get strikers busted for littering—but we believe WVO's line is responsible, not direct police ties.)

To sum this up, from matter to consciousness—and from consciousness to matter—involves a *leap*. If no leap is made, if theory is not treated as, in Lenin's words, "abstractions" that "reflect nature more deeply, truly and *completely*," then there is no way theory can be grasped *and applied* in practice—which involves another leap. As the *Revolution* article on the theoretical struggle stresses, "How can theory be applied if it is not studied, how can it be applied well if it is not studied deeply and consistently?"

THEORY "IN ITS OWN RIGHT"

Studying theory "in its own right," which WVO so bitterly and woefully attacks, means studying the basic laws, the universal principles of Marxism, as abstractions reflecting nature (and society) in a concentrated way, not to *break* the link between theory and practice, turning theory into dogma, something "for its own sake," but to carry out more correctly the dialectic from practice to theory and back to practice, so that as fully as possible we conform our thinking and action to the principles summarized by Mao in *On Practice*: "Start from perceptual knowledge and actively develop it into rational knowledge; then start from rational knowledge and actively guide revolutionary practice to change both the subjective and objective world. Practice, knowledge, again practice, and again knowledge. This form repeats itself in endless cycles, and with each cycle the content of practice and knowledge rises to a higher level. Such is the whole of the dialec-

tical-materialist theory of knowledge, and such is the dialectical-materialist theory of the unity of knowing and doing."

And such is the basic law which WVO consistently and completely violates. Thus, despite its pompous proclamations that it is "the only organization that can provide leadership" for the working class and oppressed nationalities, WVO is utterly incapable of leading anyone under its influence anywhere but backward, away from the goal of revolution. And, despite its name, it is clear that this organization represents not the viewpoint of the working class, but that of the petty bourgeoisie, which is held down by the existing order and lashes out against it, but is incapable of seeing beyond—let alone leading the masses beyond—the framework of the capitalist system and which, in pursuit of its own narrow interests, declares itself the savior of the masses, and demands that the masses elevate it as such.

But despite WVO, and against it—and other, far more formidable, foes—Marxism is bound to take root more deeply in the working class and among the masses generally, as the Party deepens its grasp of Marxism and its ability to concretely apply it to leading mass struggle, and ever greater numbers of workers and others oppressed by the ruling class are armed with this science and use it as a guide to acting to achieve their own emancipation and the emancipation of all mankind from the fetters of class society.

WVO's Opportunism in Theory and Practice

JOHN B. TYLER

The Workers Viewpoint Organization is only one of a number of petty bourgeois sects currently billing themselves as the genuine saviours of the American proletariat, or to put it in WVO's own words, "The line of the WVO is the correct line in the U.S. communist movement and . . . the WVO is the leading circle, the only organization that can serve as the base of operations for the formation of the genuine communist party." Unfortunately, but unsurprisingly, this is not the case. WVO's much vaunted correct line and theoretical mastery are nothing but the self-confident dogmatism of the intellectual who has read a couple of books. To them, like the other grouplets that made up the "revolutionary wing," the grinding of their own mental gears is infinitely more precious than the struggle and the knowledge of the working class and the masses of people, whom they regard as vessels to be poured full of WVO's wonderful ideas when the time is right.

WVO arrived at its dogmatism along a little different route from groups like the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization (PRRWO), the Revolutionary Workers League (RWL) and the August 29th Movement (ATM), which have roots in radical elements from the struggle of oppressed nationalities. Originally the Asian Study Group (ASG), WVO's founding leader was a former member of the Progressive Labor Party who left that organization at the point of its denunciation of China as capitalist in 1971—long after PL's denunciation of the Vietnam revolution as a plot of the "Washington—Moscow—Hanoi axis," long after PL's all-out campaign to wreck and split SDS, the largest and most influential mass anti-imperialist organization of the 1960s, long after PL's attacks on the Black liberation struggle and their declaration that "all nationalism is reactionary." As its name indicates, the ASG from its inception held that the most important task for the newly developing Marxist-Leninist forces in this country was study (see accompanying article in this issue of *The Communist*).

The last few years has seen the ASG transform itself into the multinational WVO, set up shop in several major cities and establish itself as the wordiest of the small "left" dogmatist sects that took up opposition to the formation of the RCP, USA as a major task.

The WVO established as its "line of demarcation" with the RU

and other forces forming the Party, the question of the role of theory. They attacked the RCP as pragmatist, claiming that it was incorrect and opportunist to form a Party on the basis of applying the theory of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought to the practice of building the struggle of the working class and other sections of masses and from the knowledge gained in this practice formulating a programme for revolution in the U.S.

Dismayed by the fact that their polemics had not prevented the formation of the RCP, WVO hooked up with a number of similar grouplets in the "revolutionary wing" to try and form their own party as quickly as possible. Alas, the careerist appetites of the leaders of these outfits were too great—especially as compared to the meager meal they had before them, the small numbers making up this "wing"—to sustain such unity. The "wing" has fragmented with WVO and PRRWO/RWL each on the verge of declaring itself a Marxist-Leninist party and some of the more marginal "wing" components back in limbo, either too timid or too realistic to assume the mantle of the Party, but with little other idea of what they should be doing.

PHONY DEFENDERS OF PRACTICE

The formation and disintegration of the "Revolutionary Wing" took place amid a flurry of polemical articles which provide us with an opportunity to examine the line of the Workers Viewpoint Organization from a different angle than their "defense of theory" from the RCP's onslaughts. The accompanying article in this issue of *The Communist* demonstrates that the "theory" of WVO is dogmatism which denies the dialectical-materialist understanding of knowledge and the actual relationship between theory and practice. Workers Viewpoint vehemently denies that it's dogmatic, of course, and uses the convenient imbecilities of the nakedly dogmatist PRRWO to display their less crude—although no less wrong—views in the most favorable light. PRRWO has never shaken off the ill effects of its brief courtship a few years back with the "Communist League" (now the "Communist Labor Party"), which held that practice could only be "bowing to spontaneity" and that the "spontaneous acts" of the masses could not even "contribute to the revolution."

Thus, today, PRRWO and their cohorts in the RWL maintain the narrowest possible interpretation of such dogmatist "unity" principles as "(1) propaganda as our chief form of activity," and "(8) upholding the leading role of M-L theory and party building as the central task." (reported as unity principles of the "Revolutionary Wing" in *Workers Viewpoint* newspaper, Aug. 1976, p. 7) PRRWO interpreted the first of these to mean propaganda must be the *only* form of activity and openly denied that there can be any

relationship between building the "spontaneous" struggle of the masses and the "central task" of party building.

This is grist to WVO's mill. PRRWO is "forcing themselves into dogmatism and sectarianism, the two ideological deviations that Lenin so aptly warned us to guard against," they scold, then piously assert, "Communists must undertake our practical tasks among the working class as theoreticians, propagandists, agitators and organizers." (both quotes from *Workers Viewpoint Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 8-9)

Here is the heart of the Workers Viewpoint pitch: first and foremost, they claim to be theoreticians, pointing to their penchant for polemics which are richly larded with quotes from Marxist classics and are positively stupefying in their long-windedness and incoherence. But in addition to their theoretical claims, the WVO boasts of its participation in the mass struggle, of having as long as "three years ago" (!) "allocated the *overwhelming majority* of our forces to do work among the proletariat" and as "is known to all" of having "led mass movements of tens of thousands among different oppressed nationalities." (*Workers Viewpoint* newspaper, January 1977, pp. S1-2, italics in original) With this formula WVO is moving to corral demoralized members from other sectlets and hopes to attract people who were once active in the student and national movements.

But for all the "lines of demarcation" WVO and PRRWO strive to draw between themselves, the fact is they "fought so bitterly simply because they were the opposite poles of the same stupidity," to borrow Engel's characterization of two disputing ruling class parties in the Germany of the 1860s. (*The Peasant War in Germany*, Preface to the Second Edition, International Publishers, p. 15) In claiming to uphold participation in the struggle of the working class, the Workers Viewpoint Organization is marching under a flag just as false as the "theoretical guru" banner they wave. To understand how this is so it is necessary to pose only one question to our dogmatists—why is it the WVO advocates participation in mass struggle, in practice?

WVO HUNTS FOR THE ADVANCED

The WVO makes no bones about it. "Propaganda to win over the advanced is our chief form of activity" (*Workers Viewpoint* newspaper, Aug. 1976, p. S2), but to find advanced workers to propagandize and win to WVO, this activity must be carried out "in the thick of class struggle." (*Workers Viewpoint Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 7) In short, they enter the mass struggle in order to strip the leading elements away from it.

If this seems a harsh characterization, consider the following list of six ways in which the WVO considers that participation in the

African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC) "can serve our tasks of party building, helping to carry out our responsibility to support national liberation work".

"(1) ALSC as an organization of advanced and intermediate, can help to identify and win over advanced workers and elements.

"(2) can support national liberation struggles and carry out ideological preparation against the danger of world war, in particular superpower contention in southern Africa, through propaganda.

"(3) can help consolidate and train advanced workers already under the guidance of communists.

"(4) can help develop through struggle political line, particularly on the international situation.

"(5) can provide a form to struggle for unity and joint work with other communists, as well as to aid in demarcating the genuine from the sham.

"(6) can help accumulate revolutionary forces under the leadership of communists, while forging the party." (*Workers Viewpoint* newspaper, Sept.-Oct. 1976, p. 9)

Obviously, Workers Viewpoint sees ALSC as little more than a game preserve where "advanced workers and elements" can be lured, trapped and "trained." Most significantly, even in their one token point on supporting the national liberation struggles (how?) there is not a word on building the *struggle* of the American people against the criminal role of our own imperialist bourgeoisie in southern Africa, on uniting with and deepening the powerful sentiments in support of African liberation which are widespread in this country, particularly among Black people, or on linking this battle with the overall struggle against the monopoly capitalists in this country and the struggle in southern Africa and worldwide against the two superpowers.

This is not an accidental omission. In article after article WVO carries on about the importance of winning and consolidating the advanced as communists, but one searches in vain for one of Mao Tse-tung's most important teachings on this question: "The masses in any given place are generally composed of three parts, the relatively active, the intermediate and the relatively backward. The leaders must therefore be skilled in uniting the small number of active elements around the leadership and must rely on them to raise the level of the intermediate elements and win over the backward elements." ("Some Questions Concerning Methods of Leadership," *Selected Works*, Vol. 3, p. 118) For WVO the advanced are simply building blocks from which they can construct their "party." They do not understand that the advanced workers (including both those who have and who have not yet been won to Marxism-Leninism) are a lever, and that communists unite with the advanced precisely to set into motion against the bourgeoisie ever larger sections of the proletariat and assist it to become a

class for itself. Furthermore, WVO cannot comprehend that it is principally in the course of leading the broad masses of workers forward, that, through the work of the Party, new communists come forward from the ranks of the advanced.

Workers Viewpoint does not enter into struggles as Marxist-Leninists—rather their approach is that of Trotskyites who “intervene” in the masses’ battles in order to advance their own narrow and reactionary aims.

WVO’s sectarian arrogance is blatantly flaunted in a leaflet they addressed to electrical workers in the Chicago area in the midst of a strike last year. This leaflet preaches to the strikers that “workers can win strikes and real gains only when we fight with all of our organized working class strength under communist leadership.” First of all WVO is departing completely from reality in saying that strikes—and other struggles—can only be won when they are led by communists. Such a statement also makes the essence of communist leadership the question of whether or not people can win reforms without communist leadership—which reduces communists to the best fighters for reforms. (Of course, in keeping with its customary stereotyped sloganeering, WVO builds this to a conclusion which besides demanding “Communist Leadership of the Trade Unions!!!” includes the following slogans: “Workers Unite! End the Criminal Rule of the U.S. Monopoly Capitalist Class!! Fight for Socialism!!!” “Fight the Danger of World War! Oppose Both Superpowers!! Support All National Liberation Struggles!!” “Study Marxism, Criticize and Combat Revisionism!! Build the New U.S. Anti-Revisionist Communist Party!!!”)

Thus, while having a “left” form, the line put forward here by WVO is clearly right-wing in essence, it is defeatist with regard to mass struggle, reformist in its presentation of the role of communists and openly self-serving. What WVO is really saying is—fire the trade union misleaders and hire us, only by following us can you get anywhere—a posture typical of petty bourgeois elements trying to impose themselves on the masses as “saviors.” It is certainly true that workers do fight more effectively and in a more class conscious way when led by genuine communists applying the mass line—but that has nothing whatever to do with WVO’s declaration of its leadership.

Genuine communists everywhere, and certainly here in the United States where the Marxist-Leninist forces were born largely in the struggles of nonproletarian strata, seek not to intervene from on high, but to integrate with the working class, to become one with the masses. This is not, as dogmatists like WVO would portray it, “tailism.” It is not a passive act, nor can we passively take part in and serve the existing struggle. Instead we work to develop every struggle as a battle in the class war to overthrow the bourgeoisie and in order to do so keep three main objectives in

mind in every such struggle:

“. . . to win as much as can be won in the immediate battle and weaken the enemy; to raise the general level of consciousness and sense of organization of the struggling masses and instill in them the revolutionary outlook of the proletariat; and to develop the most active and advanced in these struggles into communists, recruit them into the Party and train them as revolutionary leaders.” (*RCP Programme*, p. 102)

For WVO, only the third objective really exists. The second is absent entirely.

NO IMPROVEMENT IN “STAGE TWO”

Let us now anticipate the denials of the WVO—“The RCP is abandoning us. Propaganda to win the advanced, that’s only for the present. In the *next* stage we go to the masses. This is exactly what Lenin says to do.” But, as usual, what we get from WVO is a perversion of Lenin.

Let’s look at WVO’s second stage. Unfortunately, WVO’s formula does not call for them to discard their dogma, or their characteristic petty-bourgeois contempt for the working class and the masses of people. “The communist movement goes through two general steps—one, to win over the class conscious proletariat to the side of socialism, to organize the vanguard of the proletariat; and two, to search after forms of transition of the approach, to link up the vanguard with all the oppressed and lead them to the offensive position.” Then WVO helpfully explains that “these two steps mutually exclude and overlap each other.” (*Workers Viewpoint Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 34) If this means anything at all, it says that the two tasks may be carried on simultaneously, but have no connection with each other. Another masterpiece of metaphysics!

What WVO appears to be basing itself on is the last chapter of Lenin’s “*Left-Wing*” *Communism, An Infantile Disorder*, “Some Conclusions.” Here Lenin speaks of a maturing revolutionary situation, and says under these conditions the proletarian party must seek “the forms of *transition* or *approach* to the proletarian dictatorship.” And in doing so he places major emphasis on the fact that Marxist “propaganda and agitation alone are not enough,” that for the masses to grasp the need for revolution and actively take up revolutionary struggle, “the masses must have their own experience.” Poor WVO, this horrible word from Lenin’s own lips.

Not only is the situation in the U.S. not now a revolutionary one, and unlikely to become one in the immediate future, but even under those conditions WVO would be a prime example of exactly

the "left" infantilism Lenin is polemicizing against.

Workers Viewpoint envisions the first stage as a rather protracted one, citing the prevalence in the U.S. of a "high degree of political liberty" which "breeds bourgeois-democratic illusions," with the result that "the fulfillment of this step is extremely difficult." (*Workers Viewpoint* journal, Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 18) This difficulty means that "our emphasis on propaganda to the advanced may even continue for awhile after the new communist party is built." (*Workers Viewpoint* newspaper, March 1976, p. S1)

Even assuming that WVO eventually does "overlap" into its second stage, there is no reason to believe that their approach to the broad masses of workers and other strata oppressed by the monopoly capitalists will include learning from the people. The question of "winning the masses to communism" is for WVO the task of elevating the lowly to the towering theoretical pinnacle they occupy.

Nowhere in WVO's carryings on can one find the spirit or practice of the basic stand summarized by Mao that "The masses are the real heroes, while we ourselves are often childish and ignorant, and without this understanding it is impossible to acquire even the most rudimentary knowledge." ("Preface and Postscript to *Rural Surveys*," *Selected Works*, Vol. 3, p. 12) Or as Mao put it on other occasions, in order to be a teacher, one must first be a pupil.

The WVO's view of organizing the masses is displayed in pathetic microcosm in their trade union articles. These are invariably written in the first person plural and "we" go through some heavy changes. At the beginning of a typical article written during the rubber strike, for example, they say "though the trade union misleaders (TUMs) have refused to fully mobilize and organize us for the strike (thus revealing their reactionary stand with the bourgeoisie) we ourselves have taken up this task. In spite of court injunctions limiting the number of pickets, still we have continued mass pickets . . ." However, two pages later, "at this time, communist propaganda is our chief form of activity," and so on. (*Workers Viewpoint* newspaper, August 1976, pp. 2, 13, italics ours) What must "we" do as "we" change in one leaflet from "ordinary worker" to dogmatist? Throw the hacks out of our unions, build a party, get set for the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Nowhere in all this is there a sense, a glimmer of understanding of the ability of the working class to recognize its class interests and transform itself, and to know and transform all of society, through struggle. As pointed out in the preceding article, WVO displays a typically petty bourgeois "incapacity to see beyond the limitations of capitalist society." This certainly holds true for their view of the proletariat.

The WVO understands all too well—and waves as a banner to oppose the struggle of the proletariat—that the working class by itself cannot develop revolutionary consciousness and ideology.

Marxism first arose, both historically and in the recent history of this country, among a section of intellectuals who have had the opportunity to study and grasp theory and who have taken up the stand of the proletariat. And it comes to the working class in the course of struggle—not spontaneously, but through the work of genuine communists, and today through the work of the Party. But for WVO, with their contempt for experience and practice, this is where it ends and they see themselves as Prometheus bearing the fire to an ignorant and trembling world.

In reality, understanding this means understanding only half the process. In taking Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought to the working class, we are *taking it home*. As Mao Tsetung summed up in *On Practice*, "It was not until the modern proletariat emerged along with immense forces of production (large-scale industry) that man was able to acquire a comprehensive, historical understanding of the development of society and turn this knowledge into a science, the science of Marxism." (*Selected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 296) Marxism-Leninism is the science of the working class and only when it is taken up by the working class can it become a material force for changing the world.

UNITED FRONT

Let us now consider the "forms of transition" to socialism, as WVO presents the question. One that WVO has already discovered is the art of proclamation. For instance, one of their leaflets issued during the 1976 auto strike raised the slogan "Immediate and All-around Preparation for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat!!!" (*WVO Auto Bulletin No. 5*, exclamation points in original) The "explanation" appended to this call does not even explain what the proletarian dictatorship is, nor does it bother to identify the present system in this country as the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie (although a note promises a later "Bulletin" on the subject). This is not propaganda. It is not agitation. It is the ranting of the self-righteous, concerned primarily with the correctness of the ritual. Were there the least danger that workers would pay serious attention to it, this call would also be thoroughly adventurous. The seizure of power in the United States is *not* an immediate question confronting the working class. Doing revolutionary work in ordinary times, in a non-revolutionary situation, is a complex and challenging task, which certainly does include doing propaganda around the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat in correct relationship to mass struggle and in a scientific and popular—not dogmatist and stereotyped—way. Proclaiming the "immediacy" of the proletarian dictatorship can only turn attention away from this task.

This kind of "Revolution Now" rhetoric does serve a useful pur-

pose for WVO, however—it covers the fact that they put forward no clear strategy for revolution in the United States. In fact, they attack outright the proletariat's real strategy, the United Front Against Imperialism.

This cannot possibly be the strategy for revolution according to WVO, since the “united front is a tactic” (*Workers Viewpoint Journal* Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 24) and nothing more. Having thus defined the possibility of the united front being a strategy out of existence, WVO goes on in this article to talk about what *they* mean by united front. Typically, they quote, within a few pages, from Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Dimitroff and, at greatest length, from their own previous writings to comment on certain questions relating to *tactical* united fronts—unity “from above and below,” “uniting to expose,” etc. And the united fronts they refer to are specific tactical united fronts—International Women's Day coalitions, unity with trade union hacks around particular issues, etc.

Alas, in their sectarian bickering with PRRWO and their narcissistic elaboration of their own ideas, *Workers Viewpoint* has managed to overlook or ignore the very existence of an entirely different type of united front, the *strategic* united front, like the worldwide United Front Against Imperialism, aimed at present at the ruling classes of the two imperialist superpowers, the U.S. and the USSR, and the United Front Against Imperialism in this country, aimed at the U.S. bourgeoisie.

These united fronts are strategic because they are a plan for basic realignment of class forces. In this country the united front is the strategy of the U.S. working class, to carry out a *realignment of the class forces* to achieve the dictatorship of the proletariat. “It is the overall political plan of the proletariat for bringing together under its leadership all possible social forces and movements, in order to concentrate the most powerful blows against the ruling class and defeat it.” (*RCP Programme*, p. 99)

It is not surprising that the WVO can't see this. A sect which has such contempt for the working class cannot help but have complete contempt for other popular classes and strata—for everyone and everything but themselves. According to them, the rage of the petty bourgeois elements as they are crushed by the monopoly capitalists evidently provides no basis for unity with them. (At first this may seem strange since WVO itself is of the petty bourgeoisie, but such sectarianism is typical of the petty bourgeoisie, which is characterized by individualism and narrowness and which has no basis of unity *as a class*.)

In reviewing *Roots* (described as a “sinister attempt,” a “most sinister attempt” to “split the working class” along national lines, “promote division and antagonism among the Afro-American people” and cover for the ruling class' efforts to usher in fascism), WVO says of “petty bourgeois reformists” like Alex Haley, “Inde-

PROGRAMME AND
CONSTITUTION
OF THE
REVOLUTIONARY
COMMUNIST PARTY
USA

\$1.00

The Programme of the RCP summarizes the present situation facing the working class in its struggle and points the road forward. It is a concentration of the Party's basic aims, strategy and tasks as the Party of the working class. It sets forth to the working class the goal of its struggle—revolution, socialism and ultimately communism—and the means to achieve this historic goal. It is a guide to action.

The Constitution of the RCP summarizes the basic Programme of the Party and sets down its basic organizational principles which enable it to carry out its tasks and responsibilities as the Party of the working class.

Prepay all orders to RCP Publications, Inc., P.O. Box 3486, Merchandise Mart, Chicago, Ill. 60654

\$1

pendent of their will, they become better defenders of the bourgeoisie than the bourgeoisie itself." (*Workers Viewpoint* newspaper, February 1977, pp. 27-8) Nonsense like this is nothing but a petty bourgeois attempt—more pathetic than sinister at this point—to isolate the working class from its potential allies.

Another example of this kind of petty bourgeois arrogance, the contempt of the elect for the uninitiated, occurred at a forum on the Boston busing plan held by the Revolutionary Union in New York in 1974. During the question period, a spokesman for the Asian Study Group identified himself, stated his group's "70% agreement" with the RU's line and went on to say that if they were in Boston, the ASG would work among both the white opponents of busing in South Boston and those Blacks who had been mobilized in defense of the busing plan—in order to keep them apart! A speaker from the RU had to state that there was no 70% agreement with this, that the task of communists in such a situation is to expose the bourgeoisie's divide and rule schemes and *unite* the masses in both communities against their real common enemy.

The attempt to deny the working class its allies and its revolutionary strategy is entirely consistent with WVO's failure to grasp the real revolutionary potential of the working class, as commented on earlier. It is precisely by engaging in and leading all struggles against oppression and its source, the bourgeoisie, that the working class comes to see the class nature and interests of other strata in the battles and understand its own great historic role as the liberator of all humanity from capitalist enslavement and class society. A key part of this is for the proletariat's own Party to enter into and give leadership to the struggles of the various non-proletarian forces and strata. However, to leave it at this, as WVO does, only indicates that they see themselves as superhuman saviours and don't understand that the proletariat *as a class* can and must take up in its millions these struggles and, in the course of fighting and leading them, develop its ability to seize and hold power.

MAIN BLOW

The Workers Viewpoint Organization's denial of the United Front Against Imperialism leaves them, as stated above, without a clearly stated strategy for proletarian revolution. They have, however, collected some bits and pieces of a strategy which are sufficiently misguided to suggest that WVO will continue its rejection of the proletariat's strategy.

For one thing they espouse the "main blow" theory which declares that the proletariat's main blow should be so directed as to isolate the middle of the road social and political forces in any given situation. The RCP's position on and criticisms of this theory have been laid out in some detail in a recent *Revolution* article—

"OL Bloodies Own Nose With Its 'Main Blow.'" (*Revolution*, Feb. 1977, p. 5) Briefly, the article counterposed to this incorrect approach, adopted from two articles by Stalin and "enriched" by various opportunists, the strategy of the united front which is aimed at uniting against the main enemy all possible forces, even the most wavering, and in this process isolating enemy agents.

In its comments on the article (in *Workers Viewpoint* newspaper, Jan. 1977, p. 17) the WVO nervously attempts to defend the "main blow" while simultaneously trying to disassociate itself from the OL and its position. The defense part consists in large part of citing a quote from Lenin (on the tasks of the *victorious* proletariat in suppressing counter-revolution) and claiming that although Lenin didn't *call* for the strategic "direction of the main blow" at what Stalin called the "compromising" forces, he *meant* it. (In fact a serious study of Lenin's writings will show that he did not put forward the "main blow" as the basis of the proletariat's strategy.)

The WVO, having dished up this crude invention, faced another problem. The *Revolution* article also pointed out that the Chinese Communist Party disagreed with the "main blow" approach. WVO chose to try and pretend that the Chinese really didn't mean what they said and that the position the *Revolution* piece had paraphrased, of aiming the main blow at the main enemy, applied only in Third World countries, while in advanced capitalist societies the "main blow" formula still applies.

To "prove" this they cite the original Chinese quote, adding their own italics and an editorial note in brackets: ". . . *In certain circumstances it may be correct to isolate the middle forces, but it is not correct to isolate them under all circumstances. Our experience* [note they qualify it as their own experience] teaches us that the main blow of the revolution should be directed at the chief enemy to isolate them, while as for the middle forces, a policy of both uniting with them and struggling against them should be adopted. . . ."

Here again WVO exposes the narrowness of its view of experience—WVO thinks the fact that the Chinese mention that their view is derived from experience is a "qualification" and that because it is summed up from experience the Chinese line can't possibly be a generally applicable approach. No, it can have application only in China and perhaps, by extension, in other semi-colonial, semi-feudal countries. The phrase "in certain circumstances it may be correct. . ." is then taken as evidence that the main blow theory is in fact generally applicable in the U.S. and other advanced capitalist countries. What sophistry!

WVO would do well to look at some of the other writings of the Chinese Communist Party, in particular the "Proposal Concerning the General Line of the International Communist Movement." The general line of the international communist movement is "one

of forming a broad united front . . . of boldly arousing the masses, expanding the revolutionary forces, winning over the middle forces and isolating the reactionary forces." (p. 4) This is the same basic formulation the WVO is trying to restrict to the Third World, while the "Proposal" says it points "out the basic direction for the revolutionary struggles of the proletariat and people of all countries." (p. 5)

As well as trying to hide from the Chinese line, WVO has to duck the OL's stupidities about "directing the main blow internationally" at the Soviet social-imperialists who are "the main social prop of imperialism." WVO does so by echoing the *Revolution* article. This does not, however, let them off the hook on the international situation. They are in complete agreement with the OL on the most important thing, the line that of the two main enemies of the world's people, the Soviet Union is the *real* main enemy or as WVO puts it in the same article "more sinister, more dangerous" than the U.S. It is "the most dangerous" of the two superpowers. Then, quickly switching from "the" to "a" they say the RCP doesn't recognize the Soviet Union as "*a* main danger" (italics ours) to "the people of the world in all continents, in all corners of the world."

Here WVO is trying its hand at a little smuggling. They know full well that the RCP, like all genuine Marxist-Leninists, consistently identifies the USSR as one of the two main enemies of the world's people. But what WVO is trying to say in the phrase cited above is not "a" but "*the* main danger." How is the Soviet Union the main danger to the people of such U.S. dominated Third World countries as Iran, such imperialist junior partners of the U.S. as Canada and how the hell is it the main danger to the American people? This "in all corners of the world" business is nothing but the same social-chauvinist line of U.S. "revolutionaries" covering for the U.S. bourgeoisie that the October League is notorious for.*

* The WVO also takes the RCP to task for ridiculing those self-proclaimed revolutionaries in this country who try to mobilize the masses to "fight appeasement" of the USSR and the "appeasers" in the U.S. ruling class. WVO says indignantly that the real question is "exposing appeasement" and that Bob Avakian, Chairman of the RCP's Central Committee, made up the idea of "fighting appeasement" out of pure wickedness. "There is no such thing as 'fight appeasement.'" Appeasement itself is a dangerous line, which feeds the other imperialist's appetite, provoking its wild ambitions." (also in *Workers Viewpoint* newspaper, January 1977, p. 33, italics in original)

This is metaphysical and idealist on several counts. One, the OL, among others, does regularly call for the masses to "oppose" or "fight appeasement," instead of, like WVO, just implying it. Two, of course erroneous lines can be fought against and not merely exposed because lines are not merely words but take concrete forms in the actions of those who hold them. Three, as pointed out in "The Real Dynamics of the Arms Race" (*Revolution*, April 1977), the policies put forward by the U.S. ruling class, including those who take a so-called "moderate" stand toward the Soviets, are "fundamentally opposed to the policy of appeasement practiced by Britain and France towards Germany before World War 2. Then the Allied imperialists hoped that unhinging the geopolitical balance would set the Nazis against the Soviet Union. While today attempting to set

In spite of all WVO's fancy footwork on this question, the fact is they still uphold the essence of the OL's "international main blow," as well as insisting on the "main blow" formula as a strategic rule for the U.S.

The target of this "main blow," the "social props" are never too precisely identified—"labor misleaders," "reformists," "liberals," "misleaders"—but WVO assures us that "the plain truth is that we still have to spend more time exposing and fighting the misleaders than we will spend on the bourgeoisie itself!" (*Workers Viewpoint* journal, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 39)

The end result of applying this approach as the general line guiding revolutionary work in this country can only be, as pointed out in the *Revolution* article, lumping together as enemies the bourgeoisie's lackeys and vacillating social forces, while letting the ruling class itself off virtually scot-free—without even winning the masses away from the leadership of various reformists and thoroughly exposing opportunists and misleaders, since they will be able to pose as the real and consistent opponents of the monopoly capitalists!

WVO'S TRANSITIONAL PROGRAM

Along with this "main blow," WVO appears to have come up with some more ideas on the "forms of transition," for their "second stage." In fact, they appear to have arrived, hopefully independently and not through study, at a primitive approximation of the notorious "transitional program" propounded by the counterrevolutionary traitor Leon Trotsky in the 1930s for his "Fourth International."

Trotsky held that between the minimum program of the masses' immediate demands and the maximum program of the seizure of state power it was necessary to propound a series of transitional demands. These demands would be ones that would sound just and reasonable to the masses but be essentially impossible to win under capitalism. If the bourgeoisie was so weak it could be forced to grant them, why you'd practically be at socialism. If not, the masses who'd been suckered into fighting for them would see how lousy capitalism is anyway and decide to overthrow it.

Here we have once again the petty-bourgeoisie's characteristic contempt for the masses. Their struggles and demands aren't good enough, can't be built as revolutionary, can't contribute to the struggle to overthrow the bourgeoisie. Instead, they have to be suckered

the Soviet Union against China is a part of U.S. foreign policy, the U.S. imperialists recognize that Europe is the grand prize the New Czars seek and nothing can substitute for NATO military might in preventing them from achieving their aim." (p. 18)

All of this "concern" by so-called communists in the U.S. about appeasement by the U.S. ruling class amounts to nothing more than a call for our own bourgeoisie to be more vigorous in pursuit of its imperialist aims.

baited into revolution with a set of demands specially designed to result in losing struggles!

WVO with their contempt for the masses' experience and struggles, their fondness for theory for its own sake and the working out of ideas in isolation from the actual class struggle, is now treading this same path. In each issue of their paper they come up with a more elaborate set of demands for the workers in whatever industry they are commenting on.

One of their major focuses is on the shorter work week (which appears in Trotsky's transitional program as "the sliding scale of hours and wages"). This drew the maximum attention from WVO during the contract strike by auto workers against Ford last fall. It is necessary to examine the context in which this was done. The issue of the shorter work week was raised during negotiations by the top labor traitors of the UAW as a cynical smokescreen to hide their sell-out maneuvers and a diversionary tactic to focus the attention of the workers away from the fight against layoffs and speedup, attacks which the companies had made with vicious intensity in the time since the previous contract.

Rather than analyzing the issues of the strike and putting forward a program that would help the auto workers to advance their interests and those of the whole class, WVO devoted most of its propaganda to touting the virtues of the shorter work week.

Their four page Auto Bulletin No. 4 is devoted entirely to the demand for the "six hour day, no cut in pay" and it is explained that this demand if it is raised only for the auto workers stunts the growth of class struggle and that the auto workers must raise the demand "the six hour day for the whole working class." This leads into a denunciation of the OL for raising the "vague" demand for a "shorter work week with no cut in pay," and not including the whole class. The CPUSA and others are criticized because they raise the demand of "30 for 40" "within the context of bourgeois legality—through negotiations, by appealing to the bureaucrats, the government and the company."

Along comes Auto Bulletin No. 5. Now the main focus is on the slogan "30 for 40" (meaning a thirty hour work week with a paycheck as large as that formerly paid for forty hours of work). WVO's new criticism is that this promotes the conservative, bourgeois motto "A fair day's work for a fair day's pay." (Under some circumstances at least, it could do that, but WVO's treatment of this, true to form, is a perversion of Marxism.) They explain, "During 40 hours of work we are producing much more than the 40 hours of pay that is given us. What we should ask for is all the fruits of our labor, including the surplus that the capitalists have robbed from us."

This sounds logical and Marxist, although perhaps a trifle confusing to those "advanced elements" who haven't yet run into the con-

cept of surplus value. But the logic is bourgeois and the formulation is an anarcho-syndicalist one. Even under socialism, the workers will not receive in pay the value that they produce. If WVO's glorious idea *were* carried out, workers in nonproductive jobs, for example in the sphere of distribution, would receive nothing. No funds would be available to operate the proletarian state apparatus. With no money to invest, production would stagnate instead of surging forward, free of the chains of capitalism. As different workers produce different amounts of value, vast differences in pay would exist. This is bourgeois right run amuck.

Furthermore, to draw a strong line of demarcation between themselves and those who call for "30 for 40" the WVO dropped the part of their slogan which called for "no cut in pay." In its tender concern that the workers not get any wrong ideas, the Workers Viewpoint Organization appears willing to submit on their behalf to a 25% wage cut!

And this is not the end of the story. The Aug.-Sept. WVO paper carried a sum-up article on the Ford strike which included some sections of the leaflets, like the "fruits of our labor" passage. WVO adds that the demand "Fight for the six hour day for the whole working class" is a propaganda slogan because actually fighting for it will "divert" the workers in many industries from the issues they really face. For auto workers, however, they say the six hour day is an action slogan because it can be won there under present conditions. Leaving aside the incorrectness of this judgement, what happened to the "stunting" of the class struggle that was supposed to occur if this was made just a fight in auto? What WVO is revealing is that the words "for the whole class" are formalistic window dressing designed to impose on (rather than develop in) the workers a strong class consciousness.

Furthermore, WVO has continued to throw the shorter work week around in other industries, most recently in the construction industry, where their pompous advice to the workers includes the suggestion they demand "a shorter work day." (*Workers Viewpoint* newspaper, February 1977, p. 9) No explanation accompanies this slogan so we are left in the dark as to what exactly is the critical difference between this and the October League's "vague" and "reformist" auto strike slogan of "a shorter work week."

WVO has been all over the map on the question of the shorter work week, but the motion was all in their minds. For them the auto strike provided an opportunity to preach to the ignorant and to work out in their own minds, with no relation to the actual struggle, the ideas which they were preaching.

In the real world, the shorter work week demand in the auto strike, whether in Woodcock's version or any of the "new improved leftist" forms, was a red herring. The hacks peddled it to the workers and, through the media, the public, as a magical cure for

layoffs and unemployment in the industry, in order to prevent struggle around these sharp issues and to cover their own sellout and disguise the actual causes of layoffs and unemployment. Denouncing it as an attack on the workers was a necessary step in building the actual struggle of the auto workers, working to formulate clear demands around the attacks they faced and developing organized resistance to the sellout the capitalists and their labor lieutenants had prepared. Among the results of this correct approach to the auto strike were significant advances in class consciousness among many workers and the greater consolidation of a new national rank and file organization in the industry.

MORE APRIORISM

Another example of WVO's idealist imposition of demands on the struggle crops up in the construction workers article. Along with a considerable number of other suggested slogans appears "Uphold the right of self-determination of the Afro-American nation in the Black Belt South, up to and including secession." (*Workers Viewpoint* newspaper, February 1977, p. 30)*

Discriminatory practices and white chauvinism are deeply rooted in the construction industry and unions, and have inevitably aided the capitalists in their attacks on construction workers, especially in recent years. Communists must analyze and explain these issues and build struggle around them, but the Workers Viewpoint approach won't help at all. First, the demand they raise is in itself incorrect, and secondly, it has nothing to do with the actual struggles con-

* Until recently the WVO, as an organization made up largely of Chinese-American petty-bourgeois elements, was narrow nationalist principally "on behalf of" Chinese-Americans. In fact they even engaged in "nation-building," or at least "national minority building," by insisting on the existence of a single "Asian" national minority in the U.S. This flew in the face of the reality that there are several distinct and significant national minorities in this country which originally came from Asia, including Chinese, Filipinos and Japanese, with different languages, histories and cultures.

As for the Black national question, WVO for several years boasted of its "partial position," which it emphasized did not include a line on the Black Belt nation. In the last year or so WVO has recruited a number of former RWL members, almost all Black, and the group has "broadened" its approach by conciliating to narrow nationalism among Blacks also. One symptom of this was the sudden appearance in the *Workers Viewpoint* newspaper of the Black Belt nation as a line of demarcation for all communists and revolutionaries. (This issue of *The Communist* contains "Living Socialism and Dead Dogmatism," a criticism of sterile adherence to the line that the key to Black liberation is the right of self-determination in the Black Belt.)

This is also a good time to note WVO's pose as the biggest defenders of criticism and self-criticism: "Whether one practices it or not—or whether one practices it boldly or not—this constitutes the line of demarcation between sham and genuine, staunch and vacillating communists today." Yet another "line of demarcation." (*Workers Viewpoint Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 37-38) How come, then, WVO has thus far published not a peep on why their line changed, what the thinking is behind their new position and why it took them so long to arrive at it?

struction workers are engaged in and face—including the struggle against discrimination.

Once again the actual struggle of the workers is not good enough for WVO; it can't be the basis for their developing class consciousness and revolutionary unity in connection with the work of communists. No, they must accept special demands formulated for them by WVO or their struggle can't develop.

One more absurd instance of this kind of thinking cropped up in the article on the rubber strike, cited previously. The article carries the subtitle "Turn Economic Strike into Political Strike Against Capitalism." The article carries the same exhortation—but it never explains the difference between an economic and a political strike. And as for what the focus of this "political strike" should be, no particular issue is raised. Instead WVO proceeds to recommend to the workers "the armed overthrow of the monopoly capitalist class." (*Workers Viewpoint* newspaper, August 1976, p. 13) So the rubber strike should have become a strike for the insurrection? This is not "theory," it is fantasy!

Thus, the Workers Viewpoint Organization is twice a fraud in their claim to uphold revolutionary practice as well as revolutionary theory. In their "first stage" of "winning the advanced," they seek to pull the advanced away from the struggle into their study groups and "party forming" spasms. What can already be seen of their "second stage" shows the same contempt for the struggle of the working class and the masses.

It is this struggle, the class struggle which irrepressibly flares up in spite of everything the ruling class can do, that provides the basis for grasping, applying and developing revolutionary theory and is the training ground on which the working class learns how to unite with and lead its allies in overthrowing the parasite class and how to build a new world. Communist practice means nothing if it does not mean entering wholeheartedly into this struggle in order to develop its full potential as revolutionary class struggle.

The *Communist Manifesto* itself delivers a stinging rebuke to dogmatists of WVO's stripe, stating that genuine communists

"... have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole.

"They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mould the proletarian movement....

"The theoretical conclusions of the communists are in no way based on ideas or principles that have been invented, or discovered, by this or that would-be universal reformer.

"They merely express, in general terms, actual relations springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes." (Foreign Languages Press, Peking, pp. 47-48)

Appendix

Editor's Note: This leaflet, passed out at gates and picket lines during the '76 Ford strike, is a fine example of WVO's line and practice. We reprint it for the education (and amusement) of our readers. All errors, political and otherwise, are in the original.

WORKERS' VIEWPOINT ORGANIZATION AUTO BULLETIN NO. 5
Auto workers on the move against capitalism!

The strike of the Ford workers is in its third week now. The capitalists are starting to hurt and their faithful lackeys the trade union misleaders are itching for their chance to sell us out and show their loyalty to the monopoly capitalist class. In the next few days, all kinds of schemes and clauses will be thrown out onto the negotiating table in the mad scramble to get us back on the line.

At this time, Communists and all advanced workers must grasp the general character of the strike as well as its particular features in order to lead the auto workers forward. A Chairman Mao teaches us, "in capitalist society, contradictions find expression in acute antagonisms and conflicts in sharp class struggle; they cannot be resolved by the capitalist system itself and can only be resolved by socialist revolution." Whether one stands for resolving the contradictions between the bourgeoisie and the working class by socialist revolution or through the capitalist system is a basic line of demarcation between genuine communists who fight for the interests of the proletariat versus the sham communists, the trade union misleaders (TUM's), (lackeys of the monopoly capitalist within the ranks of the workers) as well as opportunists of all shades.

EXPOSE THE REVISIONIST AND OPPORTUNIST SELL-OUT SCHEME FOR 30 FOR 40 (32 FOR 40)—FIGHT FOR THE SIX HOUR DAY!

Because of the auto workers' militant resistance against speed-up and forced overtime, misleaders of all shades have been forced to put forward demands around this issue. Woodcock put forth the bourgeois scheme of 32 for 40—40 hours pay for 32 hours work. The revisionist "C" PUSA echoed this cry with 30 for 40. The October League stumbles around even deeper in the fog with the vaguest slogan for "a shorter work week".

All these are treacherous slogans because they serve the monopoly capitalists by covering up the criminal nature of the wage labor system. It gives the working class an illusion that what we are getting for "40" is a "fair wage". Yet we know that during 40 hours of work, we are producing much more than the 40 hours of pay that is given to us. What we should ask for is all the fruits of our labor, including the surplus value that the capitalists have robbed from us. This is what Marx taught us: "Instead of the conservative motto, 'a fair day's wages for a fair day's work!' They ought to inscribe on their banner the revolutionary watchwords: 'Abolition of the wage system!'

The schemes of these right opportunists are put forward under the cover of "creating jobs", therefore "serving the needs of the working class." This only exposes further the bankruptcy of the schemes. Unemployment is inevitable as long as there is capitalism. Even the bourgeoisie admits this. In Fortune magazine, Jack Gould, an economist at the University of Chicago Business School, states that some unemployment helps to make the system efficient. "To try to run the economy at zero unemployment would be like an automobile dealer trying to run his operation with zero inventory," he says.

So who are the misleaders trying to fool? No gains for the working class come in the back door—we can fight for full employment only by mobilizing the whole working class to militantly demand no layoffs and to struggle and unite with the struggle of the employed and unemployed against the whole monopoly capitalist class and the state.

On the other hand, the Revolutionary "Communist" Party (RCP) opposes the whole issue as a "shaft". With their short-sighted outlook of fighting for only what is "imme-

diate and possible" (pragmatism) they liquidate the historic struggle of the working class for a normal working day.

Only the demand for the six hour day represents the genuine stand with the working class. As Comrade Engels wrote, "... capital regards the laborer as nothing else than labor power . . . The capitalist sees only the continuously available surplus-population and wears it out . . . Capital is reckless of the health or length of life of the laborer, unless under compulsion from society . . . Establishment of a normal working day—the result of centuries of struggle between capitalist and laborer."

NO LAYOFFS, NO SPEED-UP, NO FORCED OVERTIME

The working class has historically fought militantly against unemployment. SUB funds are a good example of concessions wrested away from the bourgeoisie by the struggle of our class. What is the real significance of these concessions? Comrade Lenin, writing about a new factory law, stated, "the significance of the new law lies in the fact that it necessarily and inevitably gives a fresh impetus to the Russian working class movement. We have seen how the law tries wherever possible to leave loopholes for the employers, to leave the most important points vague and indefinite. Everywhere there is bound to be conflict between the employers and the workers over the application of this law; and this conflict will embrace a far larger area, for the law applies to the whole of Russia. The workers will be able to wage the struggle consciously and firmly, to insist on their demands. "So, we cannot stop fighting! These forced concessions means we must push our struggle to an even higher level.

Unemployment is also part and parcel of the exploitation of the capitalist system. Under capitalism, automation and improvements in technology in industries such as auto will not improve the wellbeing of the workers. Increased mechanization will only displace more workers onto the streets since one man now will be able to perform three men's jobs. Speedups and overtime are additional methods that the capitalists use to drive workers out of jobs. Furthermore, the capitalists want to keep a pool of permanently unemployed workers in the market to keep down the price of labor.

We must stand firmly in fighting against these attacks; we must fight for NO LAYOFFS, NO SPEED-UPS, NO FORCED OVERTIME in the concrete struggle. But we must understand that these demands cannot be won consistently for the entire working class. So we must fight for them in the context of overthrowing the entire monopoly capitalist system!

FIGHT FOR ONE YEAR CONTRACTS—OPPOSE COLA—FIGHT FOR HIGHER ACROSS THE BOARD INCREASES!!!

The auto monopolies and the UAW misleaders trumpet the fact that auto workers get the best deal: the uncapped COLA, which is supposedly allowing us to keep up with rampant inflation year after year. These are straight-out lies!

COLA was devised by General Motors president, Charles E. Wilson in 1940! To stop the waves of strikes at that time and to restore production, GM offered the COLA formulas. Yet the truth is, even the best COLA only covers for yearly inflation at a rate of 6%.

Inflation is a means used by the capitalists to exploit and rob the working class. The 1973 contract brought the auto workers only a miniscule wage increase of 3% a year, which is far below the constantly rising rate of inflation. The COLA doesn't come close to making up for the difference! But even the bourgeoisie is forced to admit that real wages have gone down at least since 1973! We must demand one-year contracts and not be fooled by all the fancy COLA formulas that the bourgeoisie use to try to cool us off. We must utilize the strike weapon and fight for straight wage increases every year as our real wage is eaten up by inflation and taxes.

BUILD THE IRON UNITY OF THE WORKING CLASS! BUILD THE U.S. PROLETARIAN PARTY OF THE BOLSHEVIK TYPE—IMMEDIATE AND ALL-AROUND

PREPARATION FOR THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT!!!

Comrade workers! The situation is truly excellent. In the face of the irresistible upsurge in the working class and all oppressed peoples, the hypocritical shell of bourgeois democracy and all forms of opportunism and collaborationism are being unmasked. The bourgeoisie and all reactionaries are trembling and scrambling in desperation to preserve their rotten and parasitic system of exploitation. There is only one way out. We must grasp tightly our historical mission as the only consistently revolutionary class. We must begin the immediate and all-around preparation for the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The Workers' Viewpoint Organization is the only organization that has consistently based ourselves on the universal truths of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse tung Thought, and applied it to the concrete conditions of the U.S. revolution. We are the direct product of the irresistible upsurge of the U.S. working class. We represent this irresistible trend based on the overall most correct line in the context of providing leadership to the best elements in the Communist Movement and the working class movement. We are the only organization that can serve as the foundation for the new Party of the Bolshevik type. Only such a Party which bases itself on the correctness of ideological and political line and on the iron discipline that is forged in the thick of class struggle can lead the working class in its fight for the final aim of socialism.

NO LAYOFFS, NO SPEED-UP, NO FORCED OVERTIME!!

EXPOSE THE REVISIONIST AND OPPORTUNIST SELL-OUT SCHEME FOR 30 for 40 (32 for 40)—FIGHT FOR THE SIX HOUR DAY FOR THE WHOLE WORKING CLASS!!!

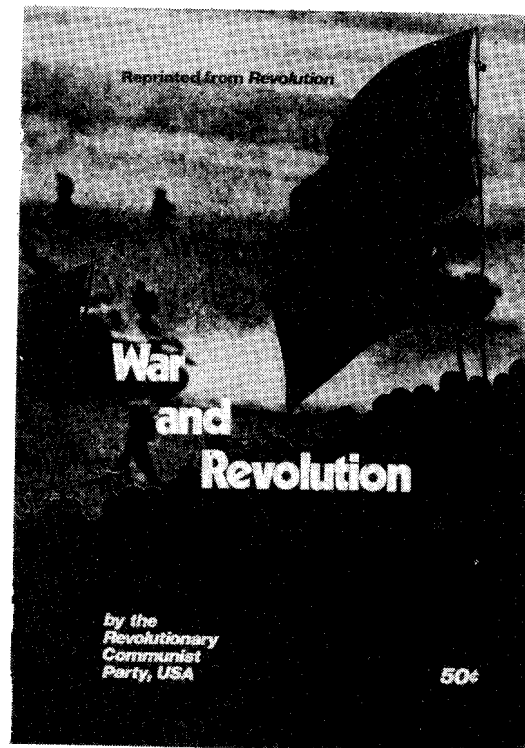
FIGHT FOR ONE YEAR CONTRACTS—OPPOSE COLA—FIGHT FOR HIGHER ACROSS THE BOARD INCREASES!!!

BUILD THE IRON UNITY OF THE WORKING CLASS!!!

FORWARD TO THE PROLETARIAN PARTY OF THE BOLSHEVIK TYPE—IMMEDIATE AND ALL-AROUND PREPARATION FOR THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT!!!!

COMING: Auto Bulletin No. 6—THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT

2 PAMPHLETS MAKE AVAILABLE IMPORTANT ARTICLES FROM *REVOLUTION*



WAR AND REVOLUTION: 7 articles from *Revolution*

... \$.50

On the World Situation, War and Revolutionary Struggle—November 15, 1975
 West Europe Revisionists Barrier to Revolution; Aid to USSR—Dec. 15, 1975
 World War: The Correct Stand is a Class Question—May 15, 1976
 On the Slogan "We Won't Fight Another Rich Man's War"—June 15, 1976
 Guardian Sows Confusion, Caves in to Imperialism—August 15, 1976
 Imperialist War and the Interests of the Proletariat—August 15, 1976
 Appendix:
 Can a Leopard Change His Spots? U.S. Tries "New Policy" in Africa
 May 15, 1976

THE MASS LINE: 3 Articles from *Revolution* . . . \$.25

Mass Line is Key to Lead Masses in Making Revolution—December 15, 1975
 Mass Line is Key to Methods of Leading Struggle—March 15, 1976
 The Day to Day Struggle and the Revolutionary Goal—May 15, 1976

Revolution is the organ of the Central Committee of the Revolutionary Communist Party

Order from RCP Publications, P.O. Box 3486, Merchandise Mart, Chicago, Ill. 60654

Living Socialism and Dead Dogmatism

The Proletarian Line and the Struggle Against Opportunism on the National Question in the U.S.

The following article was originally published by the Revolutionary Union (RU), in June 1974, as part of Red Papers 6: Build the Leadership of the Proletariat and its Party. This article was written in response to a paper by four former members of the RU in Detroit who joined forces with the Black Workers Congress (BWC) and the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization (PRRWO) in attacking the RU as "national chauvinist." The paper by these former RU members was an important part of the BWC/PRRWO arsenal—BWC adopted this paper as its own and circulated it as broadly as it could. One of the main thrusts of their attack was the line that the right of secession for the Black people in the "Black Belt" south is the heart of the Black people's struggle for liberation and that in refusing to take this position the RU was joining forces with the U.S. ruling class in its oppression of the Black people.

The article that follows thoroughly refutes this "Black Belt is key" position, as well as other erroneous lines—especially around the national question and its relation to the class struggle in the U.S.—put forward by BWC, PRRWO and a handful of people who left the RU after failing to make any headway in splitting the RU by rallying forces within it to their opportunist stand. It shows how these lines themselves lead away from building the struggle of Black people against their actual oppression and linking it with the revolutionary movement of the working class.

The article is marked by the context in which it was written—which explains its polemical style, the references to a number of other documents by the RU (including Red Papers 4 and 5) and the considerable attention given to BWC and PRRWO. But it still stands as an important analysis of the Black national question and the relation of the Black people's struggle to the overall revolutionary struggle in this country, which is a crucial question for the U.S. working class in leading the masses of people in making socialist revolution.

The polemics of which this article formed a part played a very

important role in the development of the correct line and programme for the Party of the working class in this country. Since the writing of this article, that Party, the RCP, has been formed, with the RU playing the leading role in that process. On the other hand, the BWC and PRRWO, which for a time had worked in close alliance with the RU, have since splintered into a number of groups; most of these groups and many of the individuals—though not all—who once formed part of BWC and PRRWO have completely degenerated into opportunism and, insofar as they play any role in the revolutionary movement today, act as counter-revolutionary elements. At the same time some other opportunist outfits which today exert somewhat more influence—such as the October League (OL) and more recently Workers Viewpoint Organization (WVO)—have attempted to raise this "Black Belt is key" banner as an important part of their general opposition to the correct line.

For all these reasons we are re-publishing this article from the RU's Red Papers 6 (the footnotes appearing in the article have been added from the original). Study of this article, together with the section of the RCP Programme on the Black national question, will, we believe, contribute to a deeper understanding of the correct line on this crucial question and aid in carrying out this line as a decisive part of building the revolutionary movement of the working class and its allies toward its revolutionary goal.

The paper by the clique of Detroit defectors tries to give the impression that these four were part of a large group the split from the RU. This is as phony as the line of the paper itself. It announces that it is written "in opposition to the [RU's] consolidation of the revisionist line on the Black National Question," and proclaims its intention to "refute the RU line and lay bare its revisionist content." This, of course, is not the first time that the RU line on the national question has been attacked as a "revisionist . . . racist . . . chauvinist . . . liquidation of the national question." And, as is the case with the Detroit paper, this attack has frequently been based on the argument that the key to the struggle for Black liberation and socialist revolution in the U.S. is the "Black Belt" south—generally speaking, the crescent-shaped area running from a part of Virginia down through parts of the deep south and into eastern Texas, the old plantation area which got the name "Black Belt" because of the rich quality (and color) of the soil.

In the final analysis the Detroit paper rests on the erroneous point that the heart of the Black liberation struggle is the "land question" in the "Black Belt." As part of trying to put this over, the authors of this paper mix up the use of the term "land," using it to mean *farmland*—referring to the agrarian question—and to mean *territory*—referring to the fact that the "Black Belt" is the historic homeland of Black people in the U.S. These authors try

to combine their two uses of "land" into one concept, thereby creating confusion. But whichever way you look at it, the Detroit paper is fundamentally wrong.

The Black liberation struggle is not essentially an agrarian question today—"land to the tiller" (40 acres and a mule, or 400 acres and a tractor) is not the fundamental demand of the Black people's struggle. Nor is it essentially a territorial question—"liberating the Black Belt" (today a majority white area) in order to exercise political control and the right of self-determination (political secession) there is not the highest expression of the Black people's struggle for liberation. Instead, while Black people have the right to self-determination, the Black liberation struggle is in essence a proletarian question—a fight both as a people and as part of the single multi-national working class to end national oppression and its source—capitalist rule—and build socialism, under the rule of the united working class, throughout the U.S.

From its beginning, the RU has formulated and developed its line on the national question in opposition to tendencies to liquidate it on the one hand, or to separate it from and raise it above the class struggle and interests of the proletariat, on the other hand. The Detroit paper is a clear example of the "above class struggle" tendency. While putting on the mantle of being the great upholder and defender of the Black liberation struggle against the "RU liquidationists," the Detroit paper, like all similar arguments, in reality *undercuts* the Black liberation struggle by pointing away from its real revolutionary thrust today.

In *Red Papers 4* and particularly in *Red Papers 5* we analyzed and refuted in detail this "land to the tiller" and "self-determination is the major thrust" line. We showed how clinging to this line today not only represents a complete rupture from the basic Marxist method of "concrete analysis of concrete conditions," but also "guts the heart out of the Black liberation struggle," because, "instead of emphasizing the driving force that the Black liberation struggle provides for the revolutionary struggle of the entire working class—the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat and socialism throughout the country—these groups [who hold the 'Black Belt is key' line] roll back the wheel of history to the time when the Black people were concentrated as peasants in the Black Belt and did not occupy such a powerful, strategic position in society as a whole." (*Red Papers 5*, p. 26)

The Detroit authors clearly recognize that in order to promote their petty bourgeois and reactionary longing for the past, they must base themselves on the "absolute necessity of thoroughly refuting *RP 5*." Their "refutation," as we will show, consists of lifeless dogma, cheap demagoguery, appeals to petty bourgeois moralism and a complete disregard for the communist stand of "seeking truth from facts."

But the Detroit paper does represent a more up-dated and clever attempt to put over this fundamentally incorrect and opportunist position than the arguments for the same "Black Belt is key" line that we dealt with in *RP 5*. And, unfortunately, the position of this Detroit paper has been embraced recently by the Black Workers Congress (BWC) and the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization (PRRWO), in their attempt to find one "theoretical" justification after another for their tendency to degenerate into dogmatism and bourgeois nationalism.

With the development of the U.S. mass movement and the communist movement over the past period, the task of uniting all who can be united around a Marxist-Leninist line and programme to form the new Communist Party has become the central task of communists in the U.S. today. Because of this, and because a correct line on the national question is such a crucial part of this, it is necessary to take up and defeat the Detroit paper and the fundamentally reactionary line it represents on the national question.

And it is important not only to defeat this line in and of itself, but to show how this line, and all who put it forward, act, in the end, as an aid and a cover for the revisionists, and actually obstruct the building of the new Party which makes a complete rupture with the revisionism of the "Communist Party," USA, not only organizationally, but ideologically and politically.

THE DEVELOPMENT AND THE PERIODS OF THE NATIONAL QUESTION

The Detroit paper is almost as long as it is wrong. To answer it in every detail would take a book in itself because, as Lenin said, "it requires roughly ten pages of print to untangle and popularly explain ten lines of confusion." Fortunately, we do not have to answer all of its arguments in detail because many of them have already been answered not only in *RP 4* and *5*, but in the articles in this *Red Papers* dealing with the documents of the BWC. There are, however, several main points raised in the Detroit paper which we do have to go into at more length.

The first revolves around the attack on the RU analysis that in the U.S. today, the national question has entered a new period, a third period, in which it is once more a "particular and internal state question," but on an "entirely new basis," under "new and unique conditions," in which "land to the tiller" and self-determination are not the "essential thrust" of the struggles of the oppressed nationalities, including the Black nation.

This is nothing but revisionism—American exceptionalism—say the Detroit authors, because there can only be two periods of the national question, the first when it was part of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, and the second when it has become part of the

proletarian revolution. We are in the stage of proletarian revolution, so how can the national question have entered a third period?

This is the position of our Detroit authors, and, they add, since there can be no third period, the RU is actually "trying to put the Black national question back in the first period, when the bourgeoisie played the dominant role." Therefore, in sum, according to our authors, the RU poses national struggle against the class struggle, treats the Black liberation movement as a bourgeois movement, as an obstacle to the development of the class struggle, and liquidates the revolutionary role of the Black liberation movement.

Well, it must be admitted that our Detroit authors are capable of a logical exercise. But the problem is that they base themselves on *bourgeois* logic, which demands that arguments be consistent, fit together, but not that they bear any relation to the actual development of reality. For example, take the following: there are no antagonistic classes under socialism, therefore anyone who says that there are antagonistic classes in a socialist country is really saying that it is not a socialist country at all, but a capitalist one. There is nothing inconsistent about this statement, nothing wrong with it from the point of view of bourgeois logic; the only problem is that its first assumption—that there are no antagonistic classes under socialism—is *incorrect*, as the communist movement has learned, and therefore its conclusion is also incorrect (though consistent with its first assumption).

The method of bourgeois logic is opposed to the proletarian outlook and method that bases itself on *materialism*—on the actual conditions of life and society—and on *dialectics*—seeing how things develop through the struggle of opposing forces and continually advance from one stage to a qualitatively higher one.

Let's see how this applies to the question of periods of development of the national question. We have already analyzed this in "Marxism vs. Bundism."¹ but let's briefly review it here. It is true that, as a result of WW1 and the Russian revolution, the national question entered a new period. This meant that, taking its general character, it was transformed from a question limited mainly to Europe, into a question of world importance, a question especially of the colonies struggling against imperialism. As such it became, on a world scale, an ally of the working classes in the developed countries in the struggle for socialism. It was in this sense that, again taking its general character, the national question on a world

1 "Marxism vs. Bundism" was one of the series of articles written by the RU in the polemics against the leadership of the BWC and PRRWO. This article dealt especially with the tendency of "adapting socialism to nationalism"—a phrase Stalin used to describe the Bund in Czarist Russia, which claimed to be the Marxist organization representing Jewish workers and promoted separatism. "Marxism vs. Bundism" was written specifically in response to a paper by the leadership of BWC which put forward a similar "Bundist" line.

scale became a part of the proletarian-socialist and not of the bourgeois-democratic revolution.

But it is also true that, taking its general character, the national question, especially in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, is part of the bourgeois-democratic struggle against imperialism and feudalism *in those countries*. It is, however, not a bourgeois-democratic question of the old type—leading to capitalist rule—but of a *new* type—the first stage of the revolution which, under the leadership of the proletariat and its Party, leads to proletarian rule and to socialism as its second stage. This first stage, the stage of new democratic revolution, is still the stage of struggle in most of the Third World today. As things have developed in the real world, this stage generally characterizes the second period of the national question—the new democratic epoch in the colonies—as opposed to the old bourgeois-democratic epoch in Europe that generally characterized the first period.

Does the national question in the U.S., and the Black national question in particular, fit into either of these two general periods? No, it does not. It is neither part of a bourgeois-democratic struggle of an old type, nor of a new type. It is in essence a part of the immediate, single stage struggle for proletarian rule and socialism. And this is exactly why we have said that it is in a new period, a third period. Like the struggle in the second period, the Black liberation struggle is part of the proletarian struggle for socialism, on a world scale. But unlike the second period, it is also *directly and immediately* a part of the struggle for socialism, *within the country (the U.S.) itself*.

If, by insisting that the Black national question is in the second period, our Detroit authors only wanted to stress that it is part of the world socialist and not part of any world capitalist revolution, and if along with this they made a correct analysis of the actual conditions and character of the Black liberation struggle in the U.S. today, then we would have no substantial disagreement with them. And we wouldn't quarrel over the definition of periods simply for its own sake, or argue over formulations in the abstract—that is the business of dogmatists, not Marxist-Leninists.

But our Detroit dogmatists mean more than this. They mean that the Black national question is still essentially a bourgeois-democratic question—a question of agrarian revolution linked with the right of self-determination as its essential thrust—and *in this way* it is an ally of the U.S. proletariat in the struggle for socialism. This is where we fundamentally disagree, and this is what makes the question of periods assume vital importance for the actual development of the revolutionary movement in this country—for building the Black liberation struggle in a revolutionary way and linking it most powerfully with the overall proletarian struggle for socialism as the next, immediate goal.

To oppose revolution in the name of revolution, our Detroit authors quote at length from Lenin and Stalin on the national question and its character in different periods. But in their use of these quotations they violate the very principle that they quote from Stalin: their paper, like those Stalin polemicizes most sharply against, "quotes outside of space and time, without reference to the living historical situation, and thereby violates the most elementary requirements of dialectics, and ignores the fact that what is right for one historical situation may prove to be wrong in another historical situation." (See "The National Question Once Again," Stalin, Vol. 7, p. 227)

Let's look further, for example, at our Detroit dogmatists' use of quotes from the articles by Stalin on the national question in Yugoslavia, written in 1925. In the first of these two articles, Stalin writes that "In the first stage, the national question was regarded as part of the general question of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, *that is to say as part of the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry*. In the second stage, when the national question assumed wider scope and became a question of the colonies, when it became transformed from an intra-state question into a world question, it came to be regarded as part of the general question of the proletarian revolution, as part of the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat." (Stalin, "Concerning the National Question in Yugoslavia," Vol 7, p. 71, our emphasis) It is very significant that in quoting this passage the Detroit paper leaves out the part emphasized above.

Why? Because it is not possible to strictly apply what Stalin says there to the Chinese revolution, for example—and, of course, our Detroit authors have to pose as upholders of Mao Tsetung Thought. Stalin says that the difference between the two periods was that, in the first period the national question was part of the dictatorship of the *proletariat and the peasantry*, while in the second period it is part of the *dictatorship of the proletariat*. But in China, the national democratic (new democratic) revolution led to the dictatorship not only of the workers and peasants, but of broader strata as well, under the leadership of the proletariat and its Communist Party. Sticking strictly to Stalin's analysis above would force you to say that the national liberation struggle in China was actually a part of the *first period* of the national question.

Will our dead dogmatists from Detroit please explain how Stalin's formulation above applies in all its main points to China, before 1949, or to Indochina today? They cannot. Or will they tell us that the Chinese national liberation struggle was part of the first period of the national question, the period when the national question was limited essentially to Europe and had not yet developed into the broader question of the struggle of the colonies against imperialism? They cannot do that either, without obviously and

openly making fools of themselves. This is no doubt why they omitted the part of Stalin's statement in question, and gave us three dots instead of any concrete Marxist analysis.

Stalin was referring above to the situation in Russia, in particular, as well as to the general development of the national question. In Russia, the revolution had two stages, a bourgeois-democratic stage followed by the socialist stage. But this was not as fully the case in Russia as in China—and the colonies and semi-colonies generally. The progressive role of the "liberal" bourgeoisie in Russia was much more limited than the progressive role of the patriotic national bourgeoisie in the Third World countries. And it is true that, as soon as the Czar was overthrown in February 1917, the Russian bourgeoisie as a whole became completely and antagonistically opposed to the proletariat in its revolutionary struggle.

Still, because Russia was the most backward of all the countries that had reached the stage of imperialism and had feudal and monarchial survivals intermixed with capitalism, the revolution there did pass through a bourgeois-democratic stage, aimed not immediately at socialism but at overthrowing the Czar. On the other hand, because the proletariat of Russia was very concentrated in large-scale enterprises, and because it had the leadership of a communist party, it was able to achieve the class consciousness and the political authority to carry the struggle forward to socialist revolution, right after the overthrow of the Czar.

Russia was a kind of bridge, politically and economically, as well as geographically, between Europe and the East. In a sense, the Russian revolution stood halfway between the capitalist countries and the colonial and semi-colonial countries. That is, the Russian working class, in its fight for socialism, could not move immediately to socialism—as is the task in the developed capitalist countries—nor could it go through as full or as long a period of bourgeois-democratic struggle, maintaining as broad an alliance, including sections of the national bourgeoisie, for as long a period—as is the task in the colonial and semi-colonial countries.

In Russia the task of the proletariat was first to unite with the whole peasantry as its main ally in overthrowing the Czar, and then to unite with the poor peasantry as its main ally in overthrowing capitalism and building socialism. This is what Stalin means in the passage cited above where he says that in the first period it was a question of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, while in the second period it became, in essence, the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

But, with the further development of the national question, with the growing role of the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist movements, the *general character* of the national question changed somewhat, became essentially a bourgeois-democratic question, but of a *new type*, an ally of the proletariat worldwide, and the first step to-

ward socialism within the colonial and semi-colonial countries themselves. Once again, this is what has come to characterize the general development of the national question in the second period.

Stalin is no less a great Marxist-Leninist if, in 1925, when writing mainly about the national question in Yugoslavia—which was a somewhat different situation than the colonial and semi-colonial countries—he did not foresee all these developments in the national question. (Stalin, in writings shortly afterward on the struggle in China, did stress that it was still in a bourgeois-democratic stage, but it remained for Mao Tsetung to fully develop the theory of revolution in China, and the colonial and semi-colonial countries generally.) Our Detroit authors, however, who fancy themselves great Marxist-Leninists, cannot be excused, nor even regarded as simply ignorant, if they refuse to learn from the development of the revolutionary struggle, including the national liberation movements, over the past 40-50 years.

Instead, our Detroit authors rely on the method Stalin sharply ridiculed—the tendency to “doze at the fireside and munch ready-made solutions.” But reality, and Marxism-Leninism, which is the scientific summation of reality in the process of constant change and transformation, is not so simple as repeating quotations.

To emphasize this point—and it can't be emphasized too strongly, especially when dealing with dogmatists—let's look at a few more examples. Lenin, during the same time as he stressed that, in general, the national question had become part of the world socialist revolution, also insisted that in speaking of the national question it was necessary to distinguish three types of countries, or, in essence, three historical situations. He laid it out like this: “First type: the advanced countries of Western Europe (and America), where the national movement is a thing of the *past*. Second type: Eastern Europe, where it is a thing of the *present*. Third type: semi-colonies and colonies, where it is largely a thing of the *future*. (“A Caricature of Marxism,” Lenin, Vol. 23, p. 38, emphasis and words in parentheses, Lenin's)

When Lenin says that in Western Europe and America the national movement is a thing of the past, he is not talking about particular national questions in these countries, or areas—such as the Black people in the U.S., or the question of Ireland. He means that, *as a general rule*, the period of rising capitalism, when the bourgeoisie of the newly emerging nations played a progressive role in opposing feudalism and developing modern capitalist relations and a modern (capitalist) state—this period was already a thing of the past in Western Europe and the U.S. At the same time, however, because modern (capitalist) nations developed later in Eastern Europe, and faced the domination of more powerful and developed bourgeois and landlord classes of the oppressor nations, the progressive role of national movements there was not over. And this was still

more the case in the colonies, where modern nations and progressive national movements had only begun to develop.

And, when inter-imperialist contradictions among the advanced capitalist countries exploded into WW1, the national movements, in parts of Eastern Europe, and still more so in the colonies, became a part of the general revolutionary socialist movement, headed by the proletariat of the advanced countries and aimed at overthrowing imperialism. The success of the proletarian revolution in Russia and its influence in forming and strengthening communist parties throughout the world, further strengthened the revolutionary role of the national movements, especially in the colonies, and linked them more closely with the world struggle for socialism.

On a world scale, the alliance between the proletariat of the advanced countries and the liberation struggles of the colonies became in essence an extension of the worker-peasant alliance. This was so because, as Stalin pointed out, the masses of people in the colonies were peasants and the national struggle was “in essence a peasant question,” the struggle of the peasant masses against imperialism.

From this we can see that WW1 and the Russian revolution ushered in a new era in the world—the era of proletarian revolution—and the national question, *taking its general character*, became a part of that era, and was no longer a part of the era of capitalist world revolution, of rising capitalism. But, as Lenin also stressed in the article cited above, “An era is called an era precisely because it encompasses the sum total of variegated phenomena and wars, typical and untypical, big and small, some peculiar to advanced countries, others to backward countries. To brush aside these concrete questions by resorting to general phrases about the ‘era’ is to abuse the very concept ‘era.’ ” (Lenin, same article, Vol. 23, pp. 36-37)

This is a perfect description of the “abuse” of our Detroit opportunists, who insist that because WW1 was the “beginning of the era of proletarian revolution,” therefore the character of the national question is always and everywhere the same, and to say otherwise is “revisionism,” “social-chauvinism,” “American exceptionalism,” etc. But as much as our dogmatists may want to ignore it, the era of imperialism and proletarian revolution has proved to be a very long era, longer than Lenin anticipated at the time of WW1. In the course of this era, many important changes have taken place, and the analysis and policies of communists must change in accordance with this.

For example, in one of the articles our Detroit dogmatists are most fond of quoting—and in which Lenin notes that the national question has entered a new period—he also says that “revolutionary movements of *all* kinds—including national movements—are more possible, more practicable, more stubborn, more conscious and more difficult to defeat in Europe than they are in the colonies.”

(“The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up,” Lenin, Vol. 22, p. 338, emphasis Lenin’s)

This statement was correct when Lenin wrote it in 1916, but is it true today? No, it is not, nor could you insist on applying it today without in fact liquidating the tremendous revolutionary role of the national liberation movements in the colonies.

As a result of WW 1 and the Russian revolution, the colonial areas of the world were transformed from the reserves of the bourgeoisie into the reserves of the proletariat. But, beyond that, as a result of WW2, and the events that followed it, especially the Chinese revolution, the Third World, as it is called today, has been transformed into the storm center of the international revolutionary movement. (This, too, will change at some point, the storm center will at some point shift back to the advanced capitalist countries, but that has not been the case since WW2).

Lenin, of course, could not foresee all this, exactly because, as he said at the time of WW1, the national movements in the colonies were then mainly a thing of the *future*. But, again, looking at the general character of the national movements, centered mainly in the colonies, since the time of WW1, the second period of the national question is basically defined by the fact that the struggle is a bourgeois-democratic revolution of a *new type*, part of the world socialist revolution, and the first stage leading to socialist revolution within the colonial and semi-colonial countries themselves.

The Black national question in the U.S. today, however, while certainly a part of the world socialist revolution, is not in the period of new democratic revolution, but of proletarian-socialist revolution. It is in a new, or third, period.

Summing this up, it might be argued that actually there have been *four* periods of the national question: the three “types” cited from Lenin (above) and the situation in the U.S. today. Again, our purpose is not to quarrel over definitions, in the abstract or for their own sake. But we feel that actually the national question in Eastern Europe—Lenin’s second type—was both a part of the first period—the period of rising capitalism—and then became a part of the second period—the period when bourgeois-democratic national movements became a part of the world struggle for socialism. This is another reflection of the fact that parts of Eastern Europe, and Russia, in particular, acted as a bridge between the advanced capitalist countries and the colonies and semi-colonies.

For these reasons, summing up the general development of the national question, it is essentially correct to outline three general historical situations: bourgeois-democratic of an old type, bourgeois-democratic of a new type, and proletarian-socialist. This is the basis for understanding the actual conditions and the real revolutionary thrust of the Black liberation struggle, and other national movements in the U.S. today.

In saying that the Black national question today has entered a new, third, period, we don’t mean to imply that it has developed, nice and neat, through the two previous periods—like a dance step, one, two, three. What we mean, what a real revolutionary line on the question must be based on, is that the Black liberation struggle today is not essentially the same as the old bourgeois-democratic national movements in Europe, nor is it essentially the same as the bourgeois-democratic national struggles of a new type in the colonies, but is in essence a proletarian-socialist question, a direct component part of the struggle of the single multi-national proletariat for socialism throughout the country.

And this is why we say that it is a “particular and internal state question,” but of a new type, on a far higher and more developed level—more closely and directly linked with socialist revolution—than in the first period in Europe. But wait a minute, scream our dogmatists, “in the epoch of proletarian revolution the national question cannot be seen as a particular and internal problem,” they insist. If by this they simply meant that it is fundamentally incorrect to regard the national question today as only, or mainly, a question of a few advanced capitalist countries, and not to see that it is mainly a question of the colonies, then no one—at least no genuine Marxist—would disagree. But they mean more than that, they mean that it is impermissible to analyze the concrete conditions of the national question in any given country, or to treat that national question in any one country as essentially different than in other countries.

But contrary to the pronouncements of our Little League Lenins, there are situations in which real Leninists treat the national question as a “particular and internal state question,” even today, “in the era of proletarian revolution” and even, in certain cases, when speaking of the Third World.

This, for example, is exactly how our Chinese comrades treated the question of East Pakistan (“Bangladesh”). That is, they treated the question not as part of the general struggle of the colonial countries against imperialism, but insisted instead that “Many countries in the world have nationality problems, which need to be solved properly and reasonably in conformity with the desire and interests of the people, but these are the internal affairs of the respective countries, which can be solved only by their own governments and peoples, and in which no foreign country has the right to interfere.” (See “Statement of the Government of the People’s Republic of China, December 16, 1971,” in *Peking Review*, No. 51, December 17, 1971)

Of course, the chief concern of the Chinese in this case was, quite correctly, the fact that the Soviet social-imperialists, through the government of India, were instigating and backing a reactionary secessionist movement, aimed not at liberating the people of East

Pakistan, but at carving up Pakistan, bringing a part of it under Soviet domination and gaining another base area for the encirclement of China. And the Chinese stuck to their principled stand, despite the attacks from the Trotskyites and revisionists that the Chinese were violating the right of self-determination of "Bangladesh" and opposing a struggle for national liberation.

"Bangladesh" was itself an example of a *reactionary* national movement that strengthened and did not weaken imperialism and reaction in the area overall, and this is why the Chinese opposed it.² But the Chinese statement quoted above refers not only to Pakistan, but to "Many countries in the world" whose "nationality problems" are the internal affairs of those particular countries. We would like to ask our dogmatists from Detroit—are the Chinese revisionists and chauvinists for saying this, are they deliberately distorting the fact that today, the national question is part of the "era of proletarian revolution" and "a general and international problem?"

We don't know what our dogmatists authors might say, but we believe that the Chinese are upholding Marxism, making a concrete analysis of concrete conditions, and determining their stand on the basis of the actual situation, which is different in different countries and different parts of the world, as well as in different periods. Would the Chinese say, for example, that Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau are the "internal affair" of Portugal, did they say that Algeria, before it achieved independence, was the "internal affair" of France, and so on? Of course not—this was and is the stand of the colonialists and imperialists and their revisionist agents, and the Chinese thoroughly oppose this and resolutely support such national liberation struggles. Everything, as Stalin said, depends on condition, time and place.

The Chinese did and do say for example, that the national question within China itself, that is the question of the minority nationalities in China, is solely its internal affair and particular to the

² In late 1971-early 1972, the Indian government, in league with reactionary forces in East Pakistan and backed by the Soviet social-imperialists, stirred up a phony "national liberation movement" to separate East Pakistan from the rest of Pakistan. Indian troops with Soviet arms invaded this area and succeeded in creating the separate state of Bangladesh, under Soviet-Indian domination. At the time of these events there were many in the U.S. revolutionary movement who were misled by the propaganda of the Trotskyites, revisionists and other bourgeois agents who propagated the line of support for the so-called "national liberation movement" and attacked China's principled stand of opposing Soviet-Indian aggression. After a short period of time, however, the great majority of those who had been temporarily confused saw that in the real world the people of Bangladesh—who had suffered oppression under the Pakistani government—had not been liberated at all but placed under the Indian-Soviet boot. Since then, there have been significant developments that have changed the situation in Bangladesh, but that does not change the nature of the 1971-72 events or lessen the importance of summing them up, because the same method it used in the Bangladesh affair is being employed by the Soviet social-imperialists in many parts of the world today.

Chinese revolution. Because of this correct stand, and because in the course of the Chinese revolution, separate republics were not set up in the territories of the minority nationalities, the revisionists have actually accused the Chinese of violating the Leninist principle of self-determination.

Henry Winston, chairman of the "CP"USA writes that "The Chinese Communist Party denied this right to many non-Chinese nations within China's territory, offering instead formal regional autonomy to some of the non-Chinese national minorities. This left the Han majority as the controlling force in all areas and over all nations and nationalities within the unitary state." (From *Strategy for a Black Agenda*, Chapter 6, "Maoist Violation of the Right of Self-Determination," p. 109)

It is very interesting that in attacking the Chinese, besides using outright lies about Han domination, Winston uses the very same arguments, and even the very same quotation from Lenin's article "Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up"—on the difference between a reformist and revolutionary solution to the national question, the difference between mere autonomy and the right of self-determination—that our Detroit authors use in attacking the RU's line. All that this shows is that the worst opportunists, and even outright agents of imperialism, can use the letter of Marxism against the spirit of Marxism by quoting "outside of space and time," and "ignoring the fact that what is right for one historical situation may prove to be wrong in another historical situation."

In fact, regional autonomy has proved to be the correct solution in regard to the minority nationalities in China for several reasons. First, most of these nationalities lived in conditions even more backward than the majority (Han) Chinese, and generally had not reached the stage of capitalism upon which a modern nation-state could be formed. And given this, and the actual situation of China, especially since the mid-50s, with the restoration of capitalism in the USSR, any tendency to separate these nationalities and their territories from China would only mean that they would be more vulnerable to aggression from surrounding imperialist and reactionary powers, and that they would almost certainly be forcibly removed from a socialist state and put under the domination of a reactionary state.

Still, it could conceivably be argued that in China today there are nationalities with separate territories in the border regions, which do technically constitute nations. And, on that basis, some dogmatists may want to join with the revisionists in opportunistically attacking the Chinese as violators of the right to self-determination, because, in building socialism in China, they adopted the "unitary state" form and not the Soviet form of separate republics! These dogmatists and revisionists would not want, of course, to acknowledge that, in the Russian revolution itself, the proletar-

iat did not make self-determination an “absolute” and in certain cases “violated” the right of self-determination—that is, subordinated it to the consolidation of power by the working class, as Stalin himself said, writing about Poland, for example.

But beyond that, the fact is that in China, the basic question of national liberation and self-determination was the liberation of the Chinese people as a whole, including its minority nationalities, from imperialism. It was this struggle that was a part of the world proletarian-socialist revolution, a part of the general and international national liberation struggle, especially of the colonies. The Chinese correctly dealt with the question of the minority nationalities within China as a “particular and internal state question,” within the general development of the revolution and the construction of socialism in China. And this correct stand has led to the elimination of national oppression within China, and to the establishment of genuine equality between nationalities—without the step of establishing separate republics.

This does not mean that the Soviet model was wrong in Russia. It only shows once again that one is bound to land in unity with the opportunists if he can only “regard the national question not as part of the general question of the social and political development of society, subordinated to this general question, but as something self-contained and constant, whose direction and character remain basically unchanged throughout the course of history.” (Stalin, “The National Question and Leninism,” Vol. 11, p. 365)

This, of course, is the downfall of our Detroit authors and their fellow dogmatists and worshippers of bourgeois nationalism, such as the BWC and PRRWO. Significantly, in their “Criticism” of RU National Bulletin 13³, the BWC, in unity with PRRWO, quote the following from a *China Reconstructs* supplement dealing with the question of minority nationalities in China: “Any nationality, as long as it has a compact community large enough to form an administrative unit (autonomous region, *chou* or county) can establish an autonomous area with its own organs of self-government which can exercise autonomy in administering internal affairs.” (See “Some Basic Facts about China,” *China Reconstructs Supplement*, January 1974, p. 71.) The BWC follows this quote immediately with the statement, “It is clear that the RU does not understand this question of self-determination.”

The quote from the *China Reconstructs* supplement, however, refers not to self-determination, as it was applied in the Soviet

³ National Bulletin 13 was an internal document of the RU which opposed certain bourgeois nationalist deviations being put forward within the RU at that time. This Bulletin was given to the leadership of the BWC and PRRWO, because at that time the RU was trying to maintain close and principled ties with these organizations. The BWC wrote a “Criticism” of National Bulletin 13, which actually began the polemics between the organizations.

Union, and as BWC and other dogmatists insist it must be applied in the U.S. today. It refers instead to national regional autonomy and self-government, within the single (“unitary”) socialist state. From this it is clear, once again, that it is the BWC and its dogmatist friends who do not understand self-determination and the national question—from the point of view of the proletariat.

In its degeneration further along the road of dogmatism and bourgeois nationalism, the BWC conveniently omitted this quote from *China Reconstructs* in the section of their pamphlet, *The Black Liberation Struggle, the Black Workers Congress and Proletarian Revolution*, which deals with self-determination and attacks the RU (though not by name). This was done without any self-criticism or explanation, because no doubt BWC realized that this quote went against its efforts to make the right of political secession the heart of the Black liberation struggle. Therefore, from the point of view of the BWC, it was more opportune just to delete any reference to the solution of the national question within China itself.

BLACK LIBERATION AND SOCIALIST REVOLUTION IN THE U.S.

This brings us back to why we say that the Black national question in the U.S. today is a “particular and internal state question” under “new conditions” and that self-determination (that is, the right of political secession) and agrarian revolution—“land to the tiller”—in the “Black Belt” is not at the heart of the Black liberation struggle. It is an “internal state question” because the Black nation in the U.S. exists within the state of the U.S. It is not a colony.

Even our Detroit dogmatists do not argue with this. They can not argue with it, because the 1930 Resolution of the Communist International (Comintern) on the Negro National Question in the U.S.—which our Detroit authors insist still applies in every major point today) says straight out that “It is not correct to consider the Negro zone of the South as a colony of the United States . . . [although] it would be none the less false to make a fundamental distinction between the character of national oppression to which the colonial peoples are subjected and the yoke of other oppressed nations.” (We will take up the Comintern Resolutions and the question of their applicability to the U.S. today a little later.) And our Detroit authors’ mentor, Harry Haywood,⁴ in his book *Negro*

⁴ Harry Haywood was once a member of the Communist Party, USA, during the time when it was the genuine revolutionary Party of the U.S. working class. He played a part in formulating the original Comintern line on the Negro National Question in the U.S., and in 1948 wrote a book, *Negro Liberation*, putting forward the same line. As the text of this article points out, “Harry Haywood is not to be blamed if, in 1948, he

Liberation, while calling the "Black Belt" at that time (1948) a "kind of internal 'colony,'" still referred to "Negroes in the United States (south)" as a "nation within a nation." (See *Negro Liberation*, Harry Haywood, 1948, pp. 146, 152)

The Black national question in the U.S. today is a "particular" question in the sense that it is an integral and component part of the single stage proletarian revolution in the U.S., and not a struggle separate and apart from the fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat and socialism throughout the U.S. It is not essentially the same as the national liberation struggles in the colonies and semi-colonies. The Black nation is not a part of the Third World, or a separate country from the U.S., as the BWC tried to say in its *Guardian* statement of April 3 (reprinted in this *Red Papers*). And the statement by Mao, on the character of the revolution in the colonial and semi-colonial countries—that they will lead to the establishment of a "state and governmental structure . . . basically the same, i.e., a new democratic state under the joint dictatorship of several anti-imperialist classes"—this does not apply to the Black liberation struggle in the U.S. today. (See "On New Democracy," Mao, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 351)

In the semi-colonial and colonial countries generally, the struggle for liberation of the nation basically defines the overall character of the revolutionary movement in the country as a whole. Liberation, independence from imperialism, is a first and necessary step in order to clear the ground for the next stage of struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, the struggle for socialism, throughout the entire nation (country). So, as Mao Tsetung wrote, in these conditions, the class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in that country (the oppressed nation) must be subordinated to the struggle for national liberation—independence of the country from imperialism—until the revolution has developed into its second, socialist stage. (See "Role of the Chinese Communist Party in the National War," Mao Tsetung, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 196)

This does not apply to the Black national question in the U.S. It is not necessary to go through a New Democratic stage and calling for this is in essence revisionist. Further, the Black liberation struggle, while an extremely important revolutionary force in its own right, and as a component part of the overall struggle of the

did not fully recognize the transformation [of the Black nation] that was only beginning to take place on a mass scale, but today, anyone who calls himself a Marxist but refuses to recognize this can only be characterized as a real 'straight up opportunist.' " Unfortunately Harry Haywood has continued to cling to his previous position, even though it is no longer correct; he now does fall into that category of those who call themselves Marxists but refuse to recognize the transformation that has gone on, and he has aligned himself with the opportunist and counter-revolutionary October League (OL).

working class for socialism, does not basically define the overall character of the revolutionary movement in the country as a whole, but is a particular part of it. And the overall class struggle cannot be subordinated to the struggle for the independence of the Black nation, but the reverse. Self-determination, the right of political recognition, of the Black nation must be subordinated to the overall struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat throughout the U.S. It is not the case, even when speaking only of Black workers, that "only by achieving national liberation will it be possible for the proletariat and other working people to achieve their own liberation." Rather, only through socialist revolution, as the next immediate stage, can the masses of Black people and other oppressed nationalities achieve their own liberation.

The BWC, in its pamphlet, *Black Liberation, the BWC, and Proletarian Revolution* tries to get around this fact by treating the class struggle and the national struggle as "separate but equal" struggles in the U.S. This leads them to the confused formulation that in the U.S. today there is one "fundamental contradiction"—between the working class and the bourgeoisie—but two "basic contradictions"—"The contradiction between imperialism and the oppressed Black Nation and national minorities, and the contradiction between the capitalist class and the working class." So, according to BWC, "the proletariat and the communists have two principal tasks, proletarian revolution and national liberation," which will lead to the "liberation of the whole working class and its allies on the one hand, and the freedom and liberation of Black people on the other." (See pp. 5, 9, 10)

This is fundamentally incorrect and represents an attempt to separate the national question from the class question and elevate it to a position equal to (in fact, in practice, above) the class question. As we said before, this position actually liquidates the struggle both for socialism and for Black liberation.

The single multi-national proletariat in the U.S. has one basic or fundamental task, flowing from the one basic or fundamental contradiction of this society—the overthrow of the bourgeoisie by the working class, and the establishment of the rule of the working class to build socialism and advance to communism. To accomplish this historic task, the multi-national proletariat and its Party⁵ must unite under its leadership all those who can be united against the imperialist ruling class. In particular, the proletariat must take up and lead the struggle against all national oppression, in order to unite the workers' movement with the struggle of the oppressed nationalities for liberation, for the smashing of all imperialist op-

⁵ In the original text the words "Communist Party" appeared here—referring to the Communist Party of the working class in its general sense, not to the revisionist Communist Party of the U.S. To avoid confusion on this, only the word "Party" appears in the text here.

pression of them as peoples as well as members of the single multinational working class.

This is a reflection of the fact that, in the U.S. today, the Black national question, and the national question generally, is not only an "internal state question," but a particular and direct component part of the single stage proletarian revolution. Word games and double talk about "one fundamental" and "two basic" contradictions do not change this and cannot hide the fact that BWC, and others, are trying to divorce the national struggle from the class struggle and treat the national struggle as above all a "patriotic" struggle for "independence of the homeland," which is an absolutely correct and necessary strategy for the Third World countries, but absolutely incorrect as a strategy for the national movements in the U.S. today.

From all this, it is clear why the Black national question is a particular and an internal state question, but under new conditions, in a higher form than during the first period of the national question. To summarize what we said before on this point: The Black national struggle, like national movements in today's world, generally, is part of the world proletarian-socialist movement and not part of any bourgeois-capitalist revolution. But, unlike the national movements in almost all other countries in the world, the Black liberation struggle, and other national movements in the U.S. are *directly and immediately* a component part of the single stage struggle for proletarian revolution and socialism throughout the U.S.

All this is connected with the fact that, in the U.S. today, the agrarian revolution and the question of self-determination, the right of political secession, is not at the heart of the Black liberation struggle. The fact that the RU bases itself on this understanding is what sends the worshippers of dogma and bourgeois nationalism into a frenzy. The RU, with this line "plays into the hands of the Wall Street imperialists and their Dixiecrat allies," scream the Detroit dogmatists (these asses can't even write in the language of the present period!) And they add, for good measure, that the RU also follows in the chauvinist "wake of *our* national liberals" (their emphasis). Well, since our line has set up such a howl from these authors, we must be hitting the mark in the struggle against opportunist lines, and we should therefore pursue the question further and deeper.

Since the basis of our dogmatists' opportunism is the argument that the Comintern positions on the Negro national question in the U.S., formulated 45 or so years ago, must still be applied to the letter today, it is important to analyze why the Comintern resolutions were essentially correct at that time and why, today, they no longer deal with the essence of the Black national question.

At the time of these Comintern resolutions (1928-1930), although the migration of Black people from the south and the

growth of the Black wage workers was a marked tendency, it was still correct, as a *general description*, that the masses of Black people in the U.S. "live in compact masses in the South, most of them being peasants and agricultural laborers in a state of semi-serfdom, settled in the 'Black Belt' and constituting the majority of the population, whereas the Negroes in the northern states are for the most part industrial workers of the lowest categories who have recently come to the various industrial centers from the South (having often fled from there)." (1930 Resolution) At that time, according to the Comintern, 86 percent of all Black people lived in the South, and "74 percent live in the rural districts and are dependent almost exclusively upon agriculture for a livelihood." (1928 Comintern Resolution)

On this basis, the Comintern held that Black people constituted an oppressed nation in the "Black Belt" south, while in the north they were a national minority, whose conditions and fate were closely bound up, however, with the struggle of the Negro Nation in the south for liberation. The Comintern stated very explicitly why self-determination was the highest expression of the struggle for Black liberation at that time: "Owing to the peculiar situation in the Black Belt (the fact that the majority of the resident Negro population are farmers and agricultural laborers and that the capitalist economic as well as political class rule there is not only a special kind, but *to a great extent still has pre-capitalist and semi-colonial features*), the right of self-determination of the Negroes as the main slogan of the Communist Party in the Black Belt is appropriate" (1930 Resolution, part in parentheses in original, emphasis added). Further, the Comintern stated that, because of these special features, it would be possible, through revolutionary struggle, for Black people in the "Black Belt" area of the south to break away from imperialist domination and establish a state under their own control, even before the overthrow of the imperialist ruling class throughout the country as a whole.

Do these conditions still hold true today? No, they do not. And the attempt of our dogmatists to cling to an analysis essentially correct in the past but no longer essentially correct today, leads them into distortions and demagoguery and to completely depart from the Marxist stand and method, and therefore from the real interests and struggles of the masses of Black people and the whole working class.

Let's deal with the different aspects of this, one by one. First the question of population concentration. Our authors state that "the South is still the home of 52% of the Black population." Actually, according to the 1970 census, 53% of the Black population live in the south, if you include Texas, Florida, Oklahoma, Maryland, Delaware, Tennessee and Kentucky—most (and in some cases all) of whose territories lie outside the "Black Belt" and its surround-

ing area. Do our Detroit dogmatists want to tell us that this entire area of the south constitutes the historic homeland of the Black nation, in which it has the right to self-determination? In that case, it must be pointed out in this total area, Blacks are a very small minority, only 19%.

But, as our dogmatists should know, the entire area of the south is not the historic homeland of Black people in this country. A historic homeland is exactly that—it is historically constituted and cannot be enlarged, or shrunk, arbitrarily, to fit the whims of opportunists. Attempting to do so in no way conforms to the needs of the masses of people, Black, white or any other nationality. As Mao Tsetung insists “Marxism-Leninism is a science, and science means honest, solid knowledge, there is no room for playing tricks. Let us then, be honest.”

But our opportunists offer us one trick after another. “The majority” of Black people in the south, they claim, are “still concentrated in and around the Black Belt.” What do they mean “around” the “Black Belt”? The fact is that the Black population of the “Black Belt” and surrounding areas—the total area of the historic homeland of Black people—is less than half the total Black population in the south (and less than a quarter of the Black population in the country as a whole). In Florida, there are over 1 million Black people, most of them living outside the area historically defined as the “Black Belt” and surrounding areas. Most of these Blacks live in cities. In Texas there are 1.5 million Black people; most are in cities, too, and the great majority are outside the “Black Belt” and surrounding area.

Next, our authors say that “There are 113 counties where Blacks are 50-81% of the population and 250 with a concentration of 30-49%. All of them are in the Deep South. There are only seven counties outside the South with a Black population of over 20%.”

This has to be examined from several aspects. First off, according to the 1970 census, there are 102 (not 113) counties of Black majority, all in the south, almost all “in and around” the Black Belt” area. In 1900 by comparison, there were nearly three times as many counties in the “Black Belt” area, which were Black majority. Further, according to our Detroit authors’ mentor, Harry Haywood, the territory of the “Black Belt,” the historic homeland of Black people, includes 470 counties. So in this area, only slightly more than one-fifth of the counties are Black majority today.

The fact that there are some 250 counties of 30-49% Black population in this general area (down from 290 in the 1940s) shows that there are still significant concentrations of Black people in the area—a fact the RU itself has pointed out several times (in *RP 5*, and in our reply to Carl Davidson⁶ in the *Guardian* last year, for

6. Carl Davidson is a former editor of the *Guardian*, who in response to the publica-

example). But this does not show that Black people are a majority in the area of the “Black Belt.”

In fact, in the five southern states of highest percentage Black population—Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina and Louisiana—the total Black percentage is just under 30%. The territory of these states—which are the ones demanded by the Republic of New Africa⁷—lie mainly within the “Black Belt” and surrounding area, and the total Black population within the 470 counties of the “Black Belt” territory is also clearly a minority of the population there. In other words, today, even if it were possible to conceive of separating the historic territory of Black people before proletarian revolution throughout the rest of the country, this would be a territory not with a clear Black majority and a significant white minority, but just the reverse.

Actually, our Detroit authors are finally forced to admit this, but then they try to liquidate the whole question of population. First they evade and beg the question—“Really the main question that faces us is not the racial composition of the Black Belt, but a correct analysis of the Black national question today.” Then why, worthy opportunists, do you bother to list any figures on population at all? And do you think that a “correct analysis of the Black national question” can be made by avoiding a concrete analysis of the actual conditions of the Black people, including where they live and under what conditions?⁸ Obviously they do. And, further,

tion of *RP 5* by the RU, wrote a confusing series of articles, which seemed to say that Black people throughout the U.S. were a national minority—or, at least, that this was the case in the north and was becoming the case in the south as well. Since then Davidson has joined up with the OL and adopted its opportunist “Black Belt” line.

7 The Republic of New Africa was formed by nationalist forces, mainly based among the Black petty bourgeoisie who emerged out of the Black liberation struggle in the 1960s. Its program demanded the establishment of a separate Black state, the Republic of New Africa, in the five southern states of Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina and Louisiana. It was never a very large or influential group and is practically nonexistent today, partly due to police attacks and harassment but mainly due to the fact that its line and program did not win support among the Black masses.

8 The authors of the paper criticized in this article, as well as others who uphold the “Black Belt is key” line, are forced by the objective situation to say that the question of whether or not Black people make up a majority in the “Black Belt” has nothing to do with their right of self-determination there. At the same time, as pointed out in the text, they insist on taking every word by Stalin on the national question as religious dogma that must be applied rigidly to all situations, including to the Black national question in the U.S. Unfortunately for these forces, Stalin argued, in speaking of the question of self-determination in the Soviet Union, that in order for a nationality there to form a republic with the right to self-determination it must meet three main criteria: (1) it must be a border republic and not “surrounded on all sides by USSR territory”; (2) it must “constitute a more or less compact majority within that republic;” and (3) it must have a population of at least 1 million people. (See “On the Draft Constitution of the USSR,” a speech by Stalin, Nov. 25, 1936, found in Stalin’s *Problems of Leninism*, pp. 562-63 in particular—emphasis added)

We do not believe that these criteria should be lifted from one situation to another and applied dogmatically, either. But if they are strictly applied then the only conclu-

sensing no doubt that they are walking on shaky ground, they fall back on emotional bombast and abstract moralizing—Black people have “*earned it* [the ‘Black Belt’] *as no other people have earned a homeland*” (their emphasis).

Of course, Black people and all oppressed and exploited people in the U.S. have “earned” liberation from imperialism and all its forms of oppression and exploitation, and they have earned the right to the full benefits of socialism throughout the entire U.S. But, dear dogmatists, the question remains, what *is* a correct analysis of the Black national question today—*today!*—and what will lead to liberation for Black people and socialism throughout the country? Your petty bourgeois moralizing is only an attempt to distract any serious efforts to answer this question on the basis of concrete Marxist analysis, and to build a real struggle for Black liberation and socialism.

A deeper analysis of the question of population and territory shows exactly what we said in “Marxism vs. Bundism”—that, not only are large numbers of Black people dispersed from the “Black Belt,” but within the “Black Belt” itself, they are much more dispersed (or interspersed) among whites than in previous periods. Today, the majority (56%) of Black people as well as whites in the south as a whole live in metropolitan areas. This is also true within the “Black Belt” and surrounding areas, the historic homeland of Black people.

As one example, in only two of the five states of highest Black concentration (listed above) does the rural population outnumber the urban (Mississippi, 55.5% rural; South Carolina, 52.3%), and the majority of Black people in these five states (over 55%) live in urban areas. Compare this to 1940, when all of these states had a clear and large rural majority—Mississippi, 80%; South Carolina, 75.5%; Alabama, 69.8%; Georgia, 65.6%; and Louisiana, 58.5%.

But beyond that, in the “Black Belt” and surrounding areas, the Black population is concentrated in urban areas, where Blacks make up a minority. For example, in Georgia, there are 22 counties of Black majority. But the Black population of Fulton county (including Atlanta and part of its surroundings), where Blacks make up only 39% of the total county population, is *greater than the total Black population* of all 22 counties of Black majority. Similarly, the Black population of Jefferson County, Alabama (Birmingham and surrounding areas), which is only 32% Black, is greater than the combined Black population of the 10 counties with a

tion is that under present conditions there is no basis even for the right of self-determination for Black people—a right we believe they still have, even though it is not at the heart of their struggle for liberation, as is laid out in this article. This indicates the complex nature of the Black national question in the U.S. today and emphasizes the need to apply *dialectical* materialism, in opposition to metaphysical dogma and idealism, to solve this question.

Black majority.

In South Carolina, the combined Black population of the two counties that include the cities of Charleston and Columbia, while only 31.4% (in each county) is approximately equal to the combined Black population of the 12 counties of Black majority. In Louisiana, there are three counties of high urban concentration, in each of which the Black population, while a minority, is greater than the combined Black population of the 9 majority Black counties.

Only in Mississippi, which is the most rural and most backward of the southern states and has the highest number of Black majority counties, does this pattern not as fully hold true. But even there it is clearly the case that the largest concentrations of Blacks are in urban areas where they make up a minority. For example, the Black population of Hinds County (Jackson and surrounding area), while only 39% of the total, is more than twice as high as the Black population of any county of Black majority. It is greater than the combined Black population of the seven counties with the highest Black majority (more than ¼ the total of 25 Mississippi counties with a Black majority).

In Mississippi itself—which before 1940 was *majority* Black, but today is only 37% Black—the number of counties with a Black majority (25) is less than 1/3 the total (82), and even the number of counties with more than 40% Black population is less than ½ the total. Further, the counties of Black majority, while concentrated around the Delta area and bordered by some counties in Louisiana and Arkansas which are also Black majority, are overall dispersed among and surrounded by counties of clear white majority. And this pattern is even more pronounced throughout the rest of the “Black Belt” and surrounding areas territory.

From all this it is clear that as a general pattern, even within the “Black Belt” territory, wherever Blacks are *most concentrated* they are *most dispersed* among whites. The fact that today there are over 100 counties of Black majority in the general territory of the “Black Belt” does not even have the same meaning that it would have 40-50 years ago. It is pure opportunism on the part of our Detroit authors to play up county population figures, since, as Harry Haywood stressed in *Negro Liberation*, “The Black Belt is arbitrarily broken up by a mass of state or county boundaries, and administrative, judicial and electoral subdivisions.” (p. 13)

Actually, however, while Haywood’s statement is generally correct in relation to the period of the highest concentration of Blacks in the “Black Belt”—until the period of WW2 and after—it is also true that, during this period, counties as a measure of population were much more relevant at that time than they are today. This is so because at that time the population of the “Black Belt” was overwhelmingly rural. Black people were more or less evenly distributed

throughout the area, on small plots of land within the plantation system, as peasants. This was another important factor anchoring the Black nation at that time to the territory of the "Black Belt."

But today, large sections of this same territory are only very thinly populated, and Black people (as well as whites) are concentrated in urban areas in large numbers, as workers, not peasants. This is another important aspect of the fact that not only has industry grown tremendously in the south since WW2, but that agriculture itself in the south today is essentially *capitalist and not semi-feudal*. This, along with the general fact of dispersal of Black people from the "Black Belt," is what marks the Black national question today, in the south as well as the north, as fundamentally different from the time of the Comintern Resolutions 45 years ago. Today, under these conditions, the city—in the south and north—and not the countryside is the home of the masses of people and the center of the revolutionary struggle.

One last point on population. While it is true that there are still large numbers of Black people—several million—in the "Black Belt," this has to be viewed in relation to the rest of the country as a whole. For example, the Black population of Chicago (about 1.1 million) is almost equal to the Black population of the entire state of Georgia (1.2 million), and is higher percentage wise (Chicago, 32.7%; Georgia, 25.9%). The Black population of New York City (nearly 1.7 million) is higher than that of any southern state, and the percent (21.2%) is almost as high as that of North Carolina (22.4%). Further, while the Black population of the five southern states with the highest percent of Black population (cited above) is roughly 4.8 million, the Black population of the five contiguous states of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Indiana is *greater*, 5.3 million—although the percent of Black population (about 10%) is only 1/3 that of the five southern states mentioned.

These facts would not have the significance they do, if today, as 40-50 years ago, masses of Black people in the south lived and worked, in semi-serf conditions, on the plantation system, and if, on that basis, the economy of the south as a whole not only was more backward as a region (which it is still today), but was *qualitatively* different from the rest of the country. But when this is no longer true, when the differences are *quantitative* and not qualitative, when capitalist relations generally exist in agriculture as well as industry in the south, and when most Black (and white) people live and work in the cities as proletarians (modern wage workers), the figures on population cited above do have real significance and do reflect the fact that today, south and north, the masses of Black people are directly and immediately involved in the same basic contradiction and struggle in society—the class struggle between the multi-national proletariat and the bourgeoisie. And it is this fact that has *transformed* the character of the Black national ques-

tion.

What economic factors, for example, tie the city of Baltimore and⁹ the Black people within it (Baltimore is on the very north-eastern tip of the "Black Belt" and surrounding areas territory) to Houston, Texas (far southwest of the "Black Belt" territory)—or even to Charleston, South Carolina, Memphis, Atlanta or Birmingham—more than to Philadelphia, New York City, or even Chicago? There are no economic or political factors that do this today in the sense of characterizing the "Black Belt" area as a separate economic and political zone that could be expected, any more than any other part of the country, to break away from imperialist rule, in a different way and at a different time than the rest of the country.

One other fact which is significant is that, since 1970, the out-migration of Blacks from the south has stopped—and, in fact, has been reversed, very slightly. But the Black people returning to the south are going to the cities, as we pointed out in *RP 5*. So the historical migration pattern of those returning is: rural south to urban north to urban south. This again, is another reflection of the fact that the relations of production and basic level of development of the south is on the same historical level—advanced capitalist—as the rest of the country, and the differences are *quantitative*, not *qualitative*.

THE AGRARIAN QUESTION, THE PEASANT QUESTION AND THE CLASS QUESTION TODAY

We will return to the question of population and territory in relation to the question of self-determination, but first we have to deal with the dogmatism of our Detroit authors around the agrarian question. They insist that "what the Comintern said 40 years ago still holds true. Today this landed property in the hands of white American exploiters constitutes the most important material basis of the entire system of national oppression and *serfdom* of Negroes in the Black Belt . . . These (sharecropping, contract labor, chain gangs, and we add seasonal and agricultural wage workers—ed.) are the *main forms* of present Negro slavery in the Black Belt and no breaking of the chains of this slavery is possible without confiscating all the landed property of white masters. Without this revolutionary measure, without agrarian revolution, the right of self-determination of the Negro population would be only a utopia . . ." (emphasis RU's, parenthetical comments by "ed." are those of Detroit authors).

Right off the bat, our dogmatists, by clinging to an analysis correct 45 years ago (but no longer essentially correct today) are forced to fly right in the face of reality. Is it true today that the

⁹ The word "and" was added to the original text here for clarity.

“*main forms*” of slavery of Black people in the “Black Belt” are semi-serf forms of oppression—sharecropping, contract labor, chain gangs, etc.? No, this is obviously not true, not even if we allow our Detroit “editors” to add agricultural wage workers. The main form is clearly *wage-slavery* in industry, and in *capitalist* agriculture.

Instead of dealing with this, our Detroit authors invent and distort facts. They say that “Black farmers and agricultural workers still make up a sizeable percentage of the Southern work force.” In fact, in 1970, the total southern work force numbered just under 25 million. There are approximately 175,000 Black farm laborers in the country, the great majority in the south, and, in addition, there are about an equal number (185,000) of southern “non-white” farm operators, almost all of them Black. So, together, Black farmworkers and farmers total about 360,000—or just under 1.5% of the total southern work force. Is that, worthy dogmatists, what you consider a “sizeable percentage”? One thing that can be said of these dogmatists is that respect for the facts is not one of their failings.

Our authors are forced to try to play tricks like this, because they are holding on for dear life to out-dated formulations. To let go of them would mean that they would have to go out and face the masses and the real situation as they actually are and not as they, with their petty bourgeois prejudices, would like them to be.

Stalin wrote, in 1925 in his polemics against Semich (on Yugoslavia), that the national question is in essence a peasant question, that the peasants are the main force in the national movement and “that there is no powerful national movement without the peasant army, nor can there be.” Therefore, because our dogmatists regard the articles by Stalin—and the Comintern Resolutions—of that period as the last word on the national question, (except for the writings of Harry Haywood re-stating these positions) there is only one choice for them when confronted with the realities of U.S. society, including the “Black Belt,” today. They have to invent a “peasant army,” they have to invent facts to make the peasantry the basis of the Black liberation struggle today. Stalin meant that only the masses—peasants in that period—could give the national movement its revolutionary character. But our dogmatists so mechanically worship the letter of Marxism that they can’t grasp and apply the spirit and *method* of Marxism.

Marx once said that when history does repeat itself, it is first time a tragedy, second time a farce. This holds true for our dogmatists in relation, for example, to the Narodniks in Russia at the end of the 19th century. The Narodniks were petty bourgeois romantics who argued that capitalism need not develop in Russia, that “communism” could be built directly on the basis of the feudal “communal” agricultural system. They therefore based themselves among the peasantry. These Narodniks ended up in isolated

acts of terrorism, but as Lenin said there was a certain kind of heroism to their actions, however misguided. And, at least, in going to the peasantry, the Narodniks picked a group that did make up a majority of Russian society at that time. For these reasons, the smashing of the Narodniks by the Czar can legitimately be considered a kind of tragedy.

But our authors insist today on inventing masses of peasants and moralizing about the national question on that basis. In essence, they are Narodniks without a peasantry, and this makes their stand not a tragedy, but a farce!

This, of course, does not mean that there are literally no peasants—small farmers—among the Black people in the U.S. Nor does it mean that the agrarian question is unimportant, that *absolutely all* survivals of the plantation system have been eliminated in southern agriculture or that the agrarian question has been “solved” in the interests of the people. But it is unmistakably the case that today, semi-serf forms of exploitation are not the main forms of slavery that Black people are subjected to in the south (even in the rural south), and that the basic system of agriculture in the “Black Belt” itself is not a plantation system of semi-serf exploitation, but a modern capitalist system of wage-slavery.

Lenin noted that in 1910 there were 1.5 million sharecroppers in the south of the U.S.A., and 1 million of them were Black. Further, he noted, the percentage of sharecroppers, relative to total farmers, was increasing, not decreasing. This, he said, constituted the “economic basis” of the oppression of Black people, who were overwhelmingly concentrated in the south at that time. (See “Capitalism and Agriculture in the United States of America,” Lenin, Vol. 22, pp. 24-27) But these conditions that Lenin noted do not describe the situation in the south, or the conditions of the Black masses today.

In the “Black Belt” and the whole U.S. today, as the imperialist crisis deepens, does this come down on Black people mainly in the form of further squeezing and ruining Black peasants—and along with this, increased occupation of the “Black Belt” territory by the “Yankee imperialists”? No, it comes down mainly in the form of increased exploitation of Black *wage workers* and increased oppression, marked by police terror, in the ghettos, the Black communities in the south and north. The culture of Black people reflects this transformation. Black music, for example, no longer revolves around the problems of the peasantry—picking cotton, the boll weevil, stubborn mules and heartless planters—but around the problems of workers and the general problems of life in the ghetto.

And the mass upsurge of the Black people’s struggle that developed into a mighty storm in the late ’60s, did not take the form of seizing land and resisting occupying troops in the rural “Black Belt,” but urban rebellions and resistance to police violence in the ghettos,

and struggles and organizations of Black workers. These struggles were largely spontaneous, but their character also stemmed from and reflected the concrete material conditions of Black people today, throughout the country.

This mass struggle, hitting at discrimination on the job and throughout society, police terror and the whole structure of oppression directed against the Black communities, has been a tremendous force for the liberation of Black people and against the imperialist system, exactly because it strikes at the main forms of Black people's oppression today and is so closely linked with the general working class struggle. Building and leading this struggle, and bringing to the struggling masses the understanding of how this fight is inseparably linked with the overall struggle of the working class for emancipation—this is how the communists can and must prepare the masses to rip out this oppression at its roots as part of the struggle to overthrow imperialism, build socialism and advance to communism.

On the other hand, to direct the blow not against the actual material oppression of the Black masses today, but against semi-serf exploitation and “semi-colonial features” in the “Black Belt,” which no longer constitute the main form and material basis of oppression of Black people—this really means not struggling against the present day enslavement of Black people at all. This is precisely the case with our dogmatists. It is they who liquidate the real struggle against national oppression, while covering themselves with “revolutionary phrases” about the right of political secession and the use of quotations without regard to condition, time and place.

In practice, the “Black Belt is key” dogmatists not only fail to build mass struggle against national oppression, they actually try to sabotage such struggle. For example, members of the “Communist League”¹⁰ (covering themselves as a so-called “laborers caucus”) in the Bay Area recently put out a scab leaflet attacking a demonstration in which the RU played a leading role, and which united more than 500 workers and others of all nationalities against “Operation Zebra” (police terror against Black people). This is the logical result of the line of these dogmatists who try to drag things back to the past and direct their fire away from the actual source and forms of oppression.

In their paper, our Detroit dogmatists offer no evidence that

¹⁰ The Communist League (CL) was one of a number of dogmatist sects that arose after the CP went thoroughly revisionist. It generally had little influence in the revolutionary movement during the later '60s and early '70s, but made a small splash in 1974 when forming a genuine working class Party was on the order of the day and CL formed itself into the “Communist Labor Party.” Since then it has become more and more openly reformist, though clinging to its dogmatism, and has even become more or less openly pro-Soviet.

semi-serf exploitation is still the material basis of Black people's oppression, no real refutation of the extensive analysis in *RP 5* which shows that this is no longer the case.

Instead they say that “We feel that an all-sided dialectical investigation of the social relations in the South will reveal what is undeniably true: dying, decaying imperialism cannot carry out such fundamental changes in the South's agricultural system.” But since when are the proletariat and the masses of people supposed to base their struggle on the “feelings” of opportunist authors who have already exhibited a complete contempt for facts and for the Marxist method of “seeking truth from facts”?

Does this “shadow of the plantation” still exist? Yes, but basically in an historical sense. First, in the fact that, due to the long period of widespread survivals of slavery and semi-feudal relations, the south, even today, while about on the level of development of advanced European capitalist countries, is still more rural and more backward than the rest of the U.S. And the poverty of Blacks (and whites) is still greater here.

And second, that the oppression of Black people today, north and south—in all its forms—has, as an historical basis, the fact that, after the reversal of Reconstruction,¹¹ Blacks were forced back onto the plantation and held in semi-serf (or semi-slave) oppression. All this has important effects today, just as the period of chattel slavery had important effects on the oppression of Black people after Reconstruction. But that is not the same thing as saying that the semi-serf oppression of Black peasants constitutes the *essential material base today* for the oppression of Black people, any more than literal chattel slavery as such constituted the actual material basis of oppression in, say, 1900, or 1930. We would be laughed at by the masses of Black people if we told them that today they no longer suffer oppression as a people, but we would be just as much laughed at if we tried to tell them that the form and nature of that oppression had not basically changed since 1900, 1930, or even 1950.

The 1930 Comintern Resolution drew exactly this distinction—between the historical and the present day material basis of oppression—in pointing out that the oppression of Black people was “partly due to the historical past of the American Negroes as imported slaves, but is much more due to the still existing slavery of

¹¹ Reconstruction refers to the brief period after the Civil War, during which Blacks, and poor whites, won the right to vote, and some other gains, including the right for Blacks to own property. This was reversed by the bourgeoisie, especially after the economic crisis of 1873, and was ended in 1877. The masses of Black people, who had never been granted the “forty acres and a mule” promised to them during the Civil War, were forced into the semi-serf condition of sharecroppers and stripped of all rights; large numbers of poor whites were also forced into sharecropping, and lost many of the rights they had achieved during Reconstruction.

the American Negro," in the form of "being peasants and agricultural laborers in a state of semi-serfdom." Similarly today, the oppression of Black people is due in part to the whole history of slavery, followed by the period of semi-feudal exploitation as peasants. But the present material basis is essentially the caste-like position of Black wage workers within the overall working class, which results in their concentration at the heart of the industrial proletariat. The typical Black today is not a sharecropper or small farmer but a wage worker, forced into the dirtiest, most dangerous, lowest paying jobs, and always facing the threat of unemployment—Blacks have twice the unemployment rate of whites.

This is reinforced by a structure of political, economic and social oppression which affects all classes of Black people, a structure of white supremacy that is rooted in the development of the capitalist system in this country, beginning with slavery, and remains an integral part of it in the U.S. today. This is very important because one thing our dogmatists have stumbled upon remains true! The programme of the proletariat and its Party in relation to the national question must strike at the root of national oppression, and not at its mere effects, or it will be reformist and not a revolutionary programme.

While insisting that the agrarian revolution is still the key to rooting out the national oppression of Black people, our Detroit authors are quick to add, "Obviously we don't want to see Blacks put back on the plantation." Black people are no doubt grateful to you for this, noble dogmatists, but what do you "want to see" as the solution? Their answer is to repeat the formulation of the 1930 Comintern Resolution (of course), which calls for "confiscating the landed property of the white planters and capitalists for the benefit of the Negro farmers." It is here they claim that "Black farmers and agricultural wage workers still make up a sizeable percentage of the Southern work force."

We have already shown that this last statement is completely false, and this underscores the problem with clinging to the Comintern formulations of 45 years ago—it will not lead you to strike at the root of the problem, at what today are the *main forms* of slavery of Black people in the south, as well as the north. The landed property of the (white) large landowners should certainly be expropriated for the benefit of the remaining Black farmers and farm workers—and the white ones, too, who now actually out-number Blacks in the south in the category of tenant-farming. And white tenant farmers and agricultural laborers combined in the south out-number the combined total of Blacks in these two categories, even though there are more Black agricultural wage workers than white in the south today. But, again, confiscation of large landownings does not strike at the main concrete forms of oppression of Black (or white) people in the south, not even in the rural south.

In every southern state, including even Mississippi, the percentage of workers in industry is higher than that in agriculture (in Mississippi it is now 14% in agriculture, and 20% in industrial production). But more than that, in every southern state, the numbers of Black people *living on farms* who work as farmers or farm laborers make up a *minority* of the Black farm-dwelling work force. And in every southern state, the number of Black non-farm rural dwellers who work as craftsmen, assembly line workers and other operatives, truck drivers and non-farm laborers is greater than the number who work as farmers and farm laborers.

All over the south today, industry is moving into rural areas (and some is even moving out of urban industrial areas, like Birmingham, into the rural areas). This is drawing together working people, Black and white, and increasingly proletarianizing them. The programme of the proletariat and its Party in relation to this cannot be to raise the slogan "land to the tiller," but to organize these workers, to fight for the basic step of unionization, and link this with the broader fight against the oppression of Black people and the long-range struggle for socialism throughout the country.

Struggles like the Oneita, South Carolina, strike in 1973¹² show the great potential for this. In fact, the bourgeoisie and its agents in the labor bureaucracies have already recognized this and are moving to "organize" these workers, in order to head off class conscious struggle and to keep these workers under the domination of the bourgeoisie and the influence of its ideology. This only emphasizes the need for communists to base themselves on the struggle of the industrial proletariat in the cities and even the rural areas as the main force in the south, and not to make their basic strategy the agrarian revolution.

But what about the fairly large Black rural population in the south that is on public assistance, doesn't this increase the importance of the agrarian question? Our Detroit authors don't specifically mention this group, but it is nevertheless important to analyze this, since what we are after is not simply answering some dogmatists, but, in fact, making a correct and all-sided analysis of the Black national question and, on that basis, developing a correct line and programme for linking the struggle for Black liberation with socialist revolution in the U.S.

For instance, in the five southern states of highest Black concentration and in which the "Black Belt" is centered—South Carolina,

¹² The Oneita strike was a six-month long battle waged in 1973 by 700 textile workers against the Oneita Knitting Mills in Andrews and Lane, two small towns in South Carolina. The strikers, mainly Black, finally won union recognition (and essentially a union shop, though this is technically illegal in South Carolina and most of the south) as well as other gains, including a wage increase, sick leave, insurance, a pension plan and seniority for job promotions. This strike was a key battle in the south and sparked support and struggle by workers, Black people and other forces in other parts of the south and throughout the country.

Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana—there are about 90,000 rural Black families on public assistance, or between 20% of the total rural Black families. Taking the mean figure for Black rural family size (about five) and adding in about 25,000 single individuals on public assistance, there are roughly 475,000 rural Black people in these states on public assistance—again, between 20-25% of the rural Black population and just under 10% of the total Black population of these five states. Some of these families are headed by workers in agriculture, and more by workers in other categories marked by very low wages. Others are “welfare” families, with members working, and a sizeable minority are old people no longer working. Taking in all categories, a large number are people who in the past few decades have been displaced from farming by mechanization and capitalist monopoly in agriculture.

Is it correct, then, to define this group as essentially “landless peasants”? No, on the whole, this is incorrect. Such an analysis would be generally correct if agriculture were still largely on a pre-capitalist level, and the next necessary step were to divide the land in small plots among the tillers, in order to lay the basis for future collectivization. If agriculture were still highly labor-intensive and had to involve large numbers of working people and there was almost no real modern industry in the rural areas, then such an analysis would basically apply. Such was the case, for example, in China and Mao did define sections of the rural population who were forced to do domestic and other labor for the landlords as “landless peasants.”

But in the south today, as we showed in *RP 5* (see pages 22-23) agriculture is highly mechanized, capital-intensive and not semi-feudal and labor-intensive. It no longer revolves around a plantation system, based on tenant-farming and share-cropping, but around capitalist methods and relations, based on exploitation of wage laborers who do not own the land (even nominally). In fact, it was the very replacement of feudalism by capitalism in agriculture that displaced these people from the land. This, of course, has not eliminated the contradiction between those who own and those who work the land, nor has it eliminated the national oppression of Black people. But it has transformed both into essentially proletarian questions.

As we said in *RP 5*, referring to the south as well as the rest of the country, “The land question remains important, but more so in any other country it, too, has become a proletarian question. It is now possible in the U.S., with the seizure of power by the proletariat to move directly to farm collectivization, and very quickly to socialization (direct state ownership), without first taking the step Lenin described as the ‘progressive but undoubtedly capitalist’ (bourgeois-democratic) step of dividing the land among the peasantry. The remaining small farmers will, of course, not be im-

and forcibly expropriated, but politically won over and gradually absorbed into collective life by the victorious, ruling proletariat. But this will be made far easier by the overwhelming socialization of agricultural production that has already been developed in the final stages of capitalism.” And those who have already been pushed off the land and held in conditions of underemployment and unemployment will also be brought fully into the production process, mainly in industry but to some degree in agriculture, into the political task of ruling the state and building socialism. Again, what is correct in one historical situation may be wrong in another. What is correct under conditions of feudal domination is wrong under conditions of capitalist domination. Our dogmatists in Detroit leap at this as proof that the RU line is “chauvinist to the core.” The RU takes a concrete manifestation of national oppression—the driving of Black people off the land and their displacement from their homeland—and treats this as a “progressive thing,” an advance, scream our authors. But, this only betrays our dogmatists’ total inability to grasp even the basic principles of dialectical materialism and reveals, again, their stand of petty bourgeois moralizing and longing for the past.

Of course, the development of capitalism in agriculture in the south was carried out on the basis of oppression and violence against Black and also white—peasants. This is true of all capitalist development and especially of “primitive accumulation,” the original and definitely forcible separation of the peasants from the land. Communists do not side with the bourgeoisie in doing this; we oppose it. But once it has been done, neither do we call for a return to the past, to more primitive methods of farming based on individual ownership, nor do we make a “return to the land” our slogan.

Lenin stressed exactly this point in using an analogy to expose the utopian and reactionary stand of the petty bourgeois forces who responded to imperialist war with a call for disarmament. “The weakness of the bourgeoisie,” he wrote in 1916, “is to promote the idea, to drive women and children into the factories, to torture them there, to corrupt them, to condemn them to extreme poverty. We do not ‘demand’ such a development. We do not ‘support’ it; we fight it. But how do we fight? We know that trusts and the employment of women in industry are progressive. We do not want to go back to the handicraft system, to premonopolistic capitalism, to domestic drudgery for women. Forward through the trusts, trusts, and beyond them to Socialism!” (From *Lenin on War and Peace*, Three Articles, p. 64, emphasis in original)

Imagine, poor confused Lenin actually saying that imperialism brought about a progressive change! If only he had lived long enough to read our Detroit dogmatists’ paper, he would certainly have understood the error of his ways.

But, in fact, in opposition to the metaphysical method of our opportunist authors, genuine Marxist-Leninists, basing themselves on the method of dialectical materialism, understand that the development of capitalism, even monopoly capitalism, is progressive in that it prepares the material conditions for socialism by developing the productive forces, including the working class. But on the other hand, it rests on relations of production that prevent the liberation of the productive forces and their development to a qualitatively higher level. This is what defines the essentially reactionary character of capitalism, especially in its imperialist stage. And this is why a political revolution is required, the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, in order to liberate the productive forces and advance society to the stage of socialism and eventually communism.

The same principle holds true in the sphere of the national question. This is why Lenin could write that "*This is undoubtedly progressive. Capitalism is replacing the ignorant, conservative, settled muzhik [peasant] of the Great-Russian and Ukrainian backwoods with a mobile proletariat whose conditions of life break down specifically national narrowmindedness, both Great-Russian and Ukrainian . . . [besides national oppression under capitalism] is capitalism's world-historical tendency to break down national barriers, obliterate national distinctions, and to assimilate nations—a tendency which manifests itself more and more powerfully with every passing decade, and is one of the greatest driving forces transforming capitalism into socialism.*" ("Critical Remarks on the National Question," Vol. 20, pp. 31, 28, emphasis Lenin's, words in brackets ours)

These very tendencies which Lenin called progressive, have operated in the U.S., in relation to the Black national question in particular, over the past period, especially since WW2. The bourgeoisie on the basis of its own needs—for markets, and profit—has mechanized agriculture and increased the industrialization of the south. In place of the peasant of the backwoods this has created millions of proletarians, including among Black people. It has integrated the south, including the "Black Belt," much more fully into the overall economic and political system of the whole country.

But of course, the bourgeoisie has done this always in accordance with its own interests and needs, and, while tending to economically assimilate nations, it has not and cannot eliminate national oppression or establish equality, and in that sense cannot assimilate Black people. This is what makes the contradiction between the ruling class and the masses of Black people as explosive, and the Black liberation struggle as powerful and as closely linked with the class struggle for socialism, as it is today. Only the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the building of socialism can eliminate national oppression. This struggle for proletarian revolution, and the libera-

tion of Black people, has been greatly strengthened by the very world-historical tendencies that Lenin spoke of. In this sense it has certainly been an advance, no matter how much our petty bourgeois metaphysicians may whine about it and cling to the past like a baby to his blanket.

Characteristically, they fail to grasp that, in terms of moving from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom, the fact that agriculture in the U.S. today produces huge quantities of commodities with only a very small number of laborers, is a tremendous advance. It will be a tremendous advantage for the U.S. proletariat, and the proletariat of the world, when socialism is established in the U.S. and the productive forces are liberated. As Marx pointed out, the greater the reduction of the number of workers (or man-hours) that must be tied up in producing the basic necessities of life and central to that, the more that workers in agriculture can produce beyond their own basic necessities—the further mankind is moving away from the realm of necessity, from mere animal-like existence.

Of course, to make a qualitative leap from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom requires proletarian revolution and the advance to communism, where mankind can produce "consciously and voluntarily," as Mao put it. But we will not get to this stage if we base ourselves not on a dialectical and materialist analysis of the conditions we now face under capitalism, the conditions out of which socialism will arise, but instead base ourselves on the "feelings" of reactionary petty bourgeois utopians and moralizers who want to turn back the wheel of history.

That our Detroit authors want to do exactly this is revealed in their statement that the RU's characterization of the "Black National Question *then* as a peasant question (when it was in essence a class question) and *now* as a proletarian question (and it is still in essence a class question) is straight up opportunism," (emphasis, and parentheses in original; "*then*" refers to pre-WW2). We would like to point out to these Narodniks without a peasantry that in *Negro Liberation*, Harry Haywood, whom they regard as anything but a "straight up opportunist," wrote that the Black national question was in essence a peasant question (see p. 154). And at least he was consistent, for he went on to explain the implications of this.

"The landless soil tillers of the South, Negro and white," (Haywood wrote) "are historically on the side of the industrial proletariat. But their basic aim is to be rid of landlordism and the semi-feudal conditions that keep them in bondage and poverty. While socialist agriculture could solve this problem most thoroughly, the masses of sharecroppers, as yet in the stage of aspiring to individual land holdings in the face of feudal monopoly of the land, could hardly be mobilized to fight for a purely socialist solution." (*Negro*

Liberation, p. 126)

Is this true today, when, in the south, there are not "masses of sharecroppers" but less than 100,000 (more white than Black) and there is not a feudal but a capitalist monopoly of land? No, it is not true, and this is why it is absolutely correct to say that the Black national question today is not in essence a peasant but a proletarian question, and can be linked directly and immediately with a single stage (what Haywood calls a "purely") socialist revolution. And this is why the Black national question today has entered a third period in which it is in essence neither bourgeois democratic of the old type, nor bourgeois democratic of the new type, but is proletarian-socialist in essence. Harry Haywood is not to be blamed if, in 1948, he did not fully recognize the transformation that was only beginning to take place on a mass scale, but today, anyone who calls himself a Marxist but refuses to recognize this can only be characterized as a real "straight up opportunist."

Since they have no evidence—but only their "feelings"—that the agriculture of the deep south has not been transformed from feudal to capitalist in essence, our opportunist authors have another argument. This transformation could not have taken place, they say, because the Comintern Resolutions of 45 years ago say that industrialization of the south would not eliminate the semi-feudal agriculture, which was then the basis of national oppression of Black people. This is truly brilliant! Will these Rip Van Winkles please wake up and explain why U.S. society cannot change in 45 years but must be the same today as in 1930? And where in your books, dusty dogmatists, does it say that there must be feudalism all throughout the stage of capitalism, even in the "epoch of imperialism"?

In 1930, at a time when the masses of Black people were suffering virtual slavery on the plantations of the "Black Belt" south, to take the stand that there is no need to struggle against this since industrialization of the south will solve the problem in due time—this was obviously a chauvinist, counter-revolutionary stand. The Comintern, of course, was absolutely correct in repudiating this position of the "Lovestoneites"¹³ in the U.S. communist movement

¹³ "Lovestoneites" refers to a small group, headed by Jay Lovestone, within the CP, USA which put forward a revisionist line, taking the particular form of "American exceptionalism," which seizes on certain particularities of the development of capitalism in the U.S. to argue that U.S. capitalism is fundamentally different from and superior to capitalism in other countries and in essence is exempt from the fundamental laws of capitalism and cannot be analyzed and finally abolished in accordance with the universal principles of Marxism-Leninism. Not only did this line claim that U.S. capitalism could avoid a revolutionary crisis and that the U.S. working class would not develop a revolutionary movement to overthrow capitalism, but it specifically denied the revolutionary character of the Black people's struggle and said that industrialization in the south would put an end to the oppression of Black people. Lovestone and his followers were expelled from the CP in 1929 and for about ten years after that formed a small group, claiming

of that time, and in insisting that only through revolutionary struggle against the oppression of Black people in the "Black Belt" and the support of the entire working class for this struggle, could the plantation system and the whole system of imperialism be overthrown.

But despite the heroic mass struggles of the working class and Black people, often led by the then-revolutionary CPUSA, a revolutionary situation did not develop in the U.S. in the 1930s. Socialist revolution did not come, but WW2 did. Through it the position of U.S. imperialism was temporarily strengthened, and it has been able to prolong its vulture-like existence for 30 years since the end of that war.

During this period, according to the basic laws of capitalism, it has had to try to expand and capture new markets, compete with other capitalists, make increasing use of the state as a "regulator" of the economy, conduct several wars of aggression and take other steps to preserve its rule within the U.S. and its domination worldwide. One result of this is that it has been forced to mechanize agriculture in the south and promote industrialization there, stimulated by defense spending in many cases—which is a major reason that military bases have been constructed and maintained in the south (it was not done, as the "Communist League" says, to keep the "Black Belt" a "colony").

Specifically, in relation to agriculture, the changes that have taken place in cotton production illustrate very clearly the transformation from feudal to capitalist exploitation. Cotton was the backbone of the plantation system, both before and after the Civil War.

Up until WW1, no fundamental changes took place in the methods of cotton production. The plantation system was still firmly entrenched and was still the most profitable form of exploitation for the planters and northern finance capitalists who controlled it. In 1921, however, cotton was hit hard by the boll weevil plague. And, along with this there was the general problem that the primitive methods of the plantation system constantly led to erosion and depletion of the soil. During the '20s, some of this land was transferred from cotton and other crops to livestock. But the general pattern of King Cotton, raised by semi-slave Blacks, along with poor whites, remained.

The depression of the '30s sent the price of cotton sinking. This, along with losses in the international market, ruined many poor farmers, and even some richer ones. At the same time, the general economic crunch prevented investment in machinery to pick up cotton production.

to be Marxists but opposing Marxism and the CP. Lovestone eventually gave up all pretense of Marxism and openly joined with the agents of U.S. capitalism, becoming a right hand man of George Meany and head of the AFL-CIO's arm for aiding U.S. imperialist penetration and intervention in other countries.

With the upturn of the economy due to WW2 (even before Pearl Harbor), however, tractors started to be introduced to cotton production in the south in large numbers for the first time. Still, cotton production was not really mechanized until the 1950s with the introduction of chemical herbicides and most importantly, mechanized pickers, which solved the problems of weeding and picking.

As a key indicator of the changes taking place, in 1950 only 1% of cotton in the south was picked by machine, but by 1962 the figure was over half—55%—and during the next decade, machine picking has become the overwhelming method.

To take full advantage of this machinery it was necessary to break up the pattern of small sharecropping farms and reorganize production on a larger scale, using hired wage labor in place of tenant-farming. In other words, it was necessary to make the transformation from feudal to capitalist exploitation. A reflection of this was the fact that, while in 1945 there were almost 500,000 Black cotton farmers, by 1959, the number had already fallen to only about 180,000. But the number of Black hired wage laborers in southern agriculture, including cotton, went up in the '50s.

There were several factors causing the planters and finance capitalists to make these changes. For one thing, irrigated cotton farming had been developed on a wide scale in the western states (California, Arizona and others). Another factor was the development on a wide scale of synthetic fibers, such as rayon and nylon, as cotton substitutes. Further there has been the fact that on the world market such things as soybeans, as well as cattle and dairy products, have become more profitable. The results of all this have been that cotton production has been made more capital-intensive (mechanized) in order to be more competitive with other cotton-growing areas (in the U.S. and internationally), and at the same time former cotton-growing areas have been more diversified—into soybeans, cattle raising, etc. All of this has undermined the basis of the old plantation system (and the same kind of process has basically taken place with peanuts, tobacco and other “plantation crops.”)

This shows, not that imperialism is progressive—as our dogmatists try to have us say—but only that it is anarchistic, and that, from the point of view of maximum profit—the basic law of monopoly capital—the plantation system is no longer the best means of exploitation.

Along with these changes in the economic base, there have been changes in the political superstructure in the south. One example is that, while as late as 1960 only 29.1% of Black people in the south were registered to vote, by 1970 the figure was up to 62%. And, in 1971, there were over 700 Black elected officials in the 11 states of the old Confederacy.

These changes were clearly concessions to the mass struggle of Black people, supported by other progressive forces. They certain-

ly don't mean that equality has been achieved, national oppression has been eliminated. Nevertheless, these figures are a reflection in the superstructure of the fact that the economic basis of oppression of Black people in the south itself has changed from essentially feudal to essentially capitalist exploitation.

The Comintern did not foresee all this in 1930, of course, any more than it foresaw at that time the actual character of WW2, or the worldwide anti-fascist united front, or the Chinese revolution and other socialist revolutions that followed this war. Neither, of course, did the Comintern foresee the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union. But its purpose in 1930 was not to foresee all this—“Marxists are not fortune tellers.” Its purpose was to help formulate correct policies for the revolutionary movements in the different countries according to the conditions prevailing in those countries at that time. It was this function that the Comintern Resolutions of 1928 and 1930 on the Negro Question in the U.S. served.

To analyze today the new conditions of the Black national question is not to violate but to uphold the principles of Marxism-Leninism upon which the Comintern was based. It is not “American exceptionalism” any more than it was “Chinese exceptionalism” for Mao to say that the Chinese revolution could not follow the Soviet model, or to note that, after imperialist penetration of China the feudal system of agriculture was modified (though not in that case fully transformed).

Capitalism, especially in the epoch of imperialism, cannot do without colonies. The imperialists never willingly give up colonies, and to say that they do is revisionism. But the imperialists, besides being forced by revolutionary struggle to give up colonies, also can and have changed the form of their domination in the Third World—for example, from outright colonialism to more concealed neo-colonialism. Similarly, the U.S. imperialists cannot do without national oppression within the U.S., and this will not be eliminated until the imperialists are overthrown. But the U.S. imperialists can and have changed the form of their national oppression within the U.S., in the ways we have described.

The charge of “American exceptionalism,” coming from our dogmatists, is actually an encouragement, because it indicates that we are making a concrete analysis of concrete conditions, which is pure poison to all dogmatists. Analyzing the actual conditions in the U.S. today, according to the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism, is not American exceptionalism. Arguing that these basic principles do not apply to this country *is* American exceptionalism.

One example makes this very clear. U.S. imperialism was an “exception” in WW2: it emerged from the war in a strengthened position, while the other imperialist powers (victors and vanquished alike) emerged greatly weakened. To recognize this is not Ameri-

can exceptionalism. But arguing that because of these developments, imperialism, at least U.S. imperialism, has changed its basic nature and eliminated its basic contradiction, and therefore, there will no longer be any class struggle in the U.S.; that proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat are no longer required and socialism will come (some day) through a series of reforms in the imperialist system—this is indeed American exceptionalism, revisionism. And, along with this, to argue that national oppression in the U.S. today can be eliminated or “solved” in some other way than through proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat—this, too, is American exceptionalism, revisionism.

But where, except in the demagogic distortions of our dogmatists, did the RU ever say any of this? In fact, it is our dogmatist authors who in essence take the stand of actually separating the national question in this country from the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat and raise as the basic solution to the question, bourgeois-democratic agrarian revolution and the bourgeois-democratic right of self-determination in the “Black Belt.”

THE QUESTION OF SELF-DETERMINATION, ONCE AGAIN

From the standpoint of objective, concrete analysis it is clear that the formulations of the Comintern 45 years ago and the reasons it gave for why the right of self-determination in the “Black Belt” must be the main slogan in relation to the Black national question, no longer apply. But, our dogmatists, while failing to offer any analysis that shows that semi-feudal oppression with “semi-colonial features” (as the Comintern put it) is still the actual material basis of Black people’s oppression, finally fall back on petty bourgeois moralizing.

They argue: the “Black Belt” was stolen from Black people by the bourgeoisie in alliance with the planters after the reversal of Reconstruction, and therefore *this* is the material basis of oppression *today*, and only with the return of the “Black Belt” to Black people can the oppression of Black people be eliminated. Again, this is bourgeois logic, not materialist dialectics.

The “Black Belt” was stolen from Black people with the reversal of Reconstruction, in the sense that they were deprived of ownership of land and of democratic rights—in short, they were excluded from the bourgeois-democratic revolution at that time. And on that basis, Black people developed as an oppressed nation in the territory of the plantation area, the “Black Belt.”

But that does not mean that today, with the transformation of the Black nation, the present material basis of oppression of Black people is imperialist control of the “Black Belt,” or that the basic solution to this oppression must be to return the “Black Belt” to Black people—which would require returning Black people to the

“Black Belt.” Black people were stolen from Africa to be made slaves in America, but returning to Africa is not the solution to Black people’s oppression today in the U.S. The territory of most of the southwest of the U.S. was stolen from Mexico. Does that mean that the solution to the oppression of the Mexican-American people in the U.S. today requires the return of that territory to Mexico? No, it does not, because society develops, conditions change, and the national question must be viewed as a part of this overall development and not separate from it, as Stalin stressed.

The same applies to the Black national question. The method of Marxists is to begin with the concrete material conditions, to examine them in their historical context and their dialectical development, and to build on what is rising and developing. The method of the dogmatists is to begin with the past, to impose it on the present and insist on returning to the past in the name of the future.

Our dogmatists argue that Black people have been forcibly dispersed from the “Black Belt” and that to use this as a “pretext” to rule out the right to self-determination is to unite with imperialist oppression. We have already dealt with this argument, in relation to the agrarian question, and while we don’t think that the right of self-determination has been *eliminated*, the bourgeois logic of our dogmatists cannot be used to justify the line that right of self-determination in the “Black Belt” is *the essence* of the Black liberation struggle.

Self-determination is a democratic question and it is impossible to think of self-determination on the basis of the rule of a minority, which violates the principles of consistent democracy. The Comintern resolutions stressed this fact at a time when it was possible to construct, in the general territory of the “Black Belt,” a state that was based on a Black majority, but with a “fairly significant white minority.” Today, in order to do this, it would be necessary for millions of Black people to return to the “Black Belt” territory, which is now made up of a clear white majority with a significant Black minority. And it should be pointed out that the whites in that area, in their overwhelming majority, also have roots there and have been exploited there for generations, going back before the Civil War.

The RU does not think it is correct to absolutely rule out the possibility of a reconstitution of Black people in the “Black Belt,” or even the establishment of a separate state there, on the condition, of course, that it was voluntary and not forced. If anything, in the past (for example, in *RP5*) the RU had the tendency to downplay the complications that would be involved in this and, in particular, the fact that millions of white, as well as Black, working people have historical roots in the “Black Belt” territory. Still, we were correct in saying that this does not rule out the right of self-

determination for Black people.

We recognize that, within the Black liberation movement, the line of reconstituting Black people in the south to achieve self-determination there is put forward by certain forces—for example, by the Republic of New Africa (and more recently, by the Black Workers Congress, as was pointed out in “Marxism vs. Bundism”). But such a step would only really be possible after the overthrow of imperialism, which will undoubtedly require a fairly protracted period of civil war. No one can predict how all this will go down, but exactly for this reason, no one, at least no Marxist, should insist on such a step, which might very well prove to be impossible, or contradictory to the interests of the proletariat, during such a civil war, and even after, during the period of socialist construction.

Do our dogmatists actually want to argue that reconstituting Black people in the “Black Belt” as a majority in order to decide the question of political secession is an absolute necessity and must be carried out? Or do they want to say that self-determination should be carried out on the basis of rule by a minority? If they do, that only shows that they have abstracted the national struggle from and raised it above the class struggle, and thereby tailed after the bourgeois nationalists. If they don’t, will they please explain how self-determination in the “Black Belt” can be the revolutionary basis of the Black liberation struggle? All this is why, while *upholding the right* of self-determination, it is perfectly consistent with the principles of Marxism for communists, including white communists, to struggle *politically* for the position that under present and foreseeable conditions the step of returning Black people to the “Black Belt” and actually forming a separate state there would, in fact, be a step backward. (Sometimes the proletariat has to take a step backward in order to then take two steps forward, but that doesn’t mean that communists should *advocate* steps backward.)

The fact is that the proletariat, upon coming to power in this country, will inherit a very complicated situation, especially in relation to the national question. Exactly what forms the solution this question will take, in relation not only to Black people, but Chicanos, Indians, Asian and other oppressed peoples, cannot be predicted now. Exactly what forms of self-government will be established for the nationalities within this country which have been oppressed by the imperialist ruling class cannot now be determined. But one principle is very clear and must be upheld and fought for: the white workers, who are members of the oppressor nation, and are a majority of the working class, must renounce the use of force against the masses of the oppressed nationalities in settling this question, so that it can be decided solely on the basis of what serves the interests of the proletariat and the masses of people, in consolidating and strengthening proletarian rule and building socialism.

To carry out this task, the communists must educate the workers, especially white workers, to the understanding that there is nothing “sacred” about the present boundaries of the U.S.; they were formed on the basis of barbaric oppression of the Indians, Mexican people and Black people, and that the only thing sacred is the unity of the proletariat and its allies, especially the oppressed nationalities, and the building of socialism on the basis of true national equality and voluntary union. This is what upholding the right to self-determination means under our concrete conditions.

Specifically, in relation to the Black nation, the question of whether or not to re-constitute Black people in the “Black Belt” as a majority in order to exercise self-determination is one that must be settled on the basis of what serves the interests of the masses of Black people and the whole proletariat (and fundamentally, this is the same) in carrying forward socialist revolution. Upholding the right to self-determination means, again, that white workers renounce the use of force against the Black masses in solving this question. And, if force proves necessary to suppress counter-revolutionary attempts at separation, the armed Black masses must be relied on as the main force to carry this out.

Anyone who honestly examines the work, both theoretical and practical, of the RU can see that we do conduct propaganda and agitation to educate the masses in a “self-determinist spirit” as Lenin said. What we don’t do is *advocate* that Black people return to the “Black Belt” in order to establish themselves as a ruling majority there. This, to our dogmatists, is failing to really uphold self-determination and liquidating the national question. But that only shows how completely they have departed from Marxism-Leninism and from the actual needs and struggles of the masses of the working class and the oppressed nationalities.

And this, again, is why our Detroit authors’ use of lengthy quotations from Lenin and Stalin on the right of self-determination represents exactly what Stalin warned against in one of those quotations, when he said that “Semich quotes outside of space and time, without reference to the living historical situation, and thereby violates the most elementary requirements of dialectics and ignores the fact that what is right for one historical situation may prove to be wrong in another historical situation.”

This, for example, is the case with the use our Detroit dogmatists make of Lenin’s article “The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up,” on which they rely heavily in their thesis. In this article, Lenin emphasizes that the proletariat of the oppressor nation must support “any revolt of the annexed regions,” and in this way uphold self-determination. This phrase “annexed region” is used many times throughout the article, and this points up the difficulty of trying to mechanically apply this article—and the overall thrust of Lenin’s writings on self-determination—to the Black na-

tional question today.

Take, for example, Lenin's insistence in this article on the difference between a reformist and revolutionary approach to the national question, upon which our Detroit authors bank much of their arguments. "A reformist change," Lenin says, "is one which leaves intact the foundations of power of the ruling class and is merely a concession leaving its power unimpaired. A revolutionary change undermines the foundations of power." And, say our Detroit authors, since the RU sees the "essential thrust" of the Black liberation struggle not as "wresting control of the Black Belt from the imperialists" but as fighting "against discrimination, the denial of democratic rights, violent police repression and against exploitation and oppression as members of the working class, suffering caste-like oppression within the class" (as we put it in "Bulletin 13"), therefore, they say, the RU's line is clearly reformist. Again, another exercise in bourgeois logic.

Does the RU stand for wresting control of the "Black Belt" from the imperialists? Yes, of course, but we point out two things here: 1) This can only be done as part of the overall struggle of the multi-national proletariat to overthrow monopoly capital throughout the country; and 2) when this is accomplished, as part of the single stage proletarian revolution throughout the country, it will bring to power not the Black nation as a majority in the "Black Belt," but the multi-national working class, with whites as a majority and Blacks as a significant minority in the area. (We base this on a concrete analysis of present and foreseeable conditions, recognizing, of course, that if proletarian revolution is delayed for many decades, many changes will undoubtedly take place—but then, unlike our dogmatists, the genuine Marxist-Leninists will also change their policies and tactics in accordance with this.)

Further, does the RU advocate only "mitigating" the oppression of Black people (as Lenin says of the reformist programme on the national question), while leaving the foundations of power of the oppressors intact? Of course not. We are for smashing absolutely the foundations of power of the imperialists, who oppress Black people, other oppressed nationalities and the whole working class. But, again, this means smashing the bourgeois state throughout the country, and not just eliminating their control of the "Black Belt," which, again, cannot be done except as part of the overall proletarian-socialist revolution. Do we uphold the *right* of self-determination? Yes, but under our concrete conditions it is not the "essential thrust."

The point here, and the opportunism of our Detroit dogmatists, can be further illustrated by making a comparison between the Black nation in the U.S.—a nation of a "new type"—and the nation of Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico is exactly an "annexed region" in the way Lenin uses this term. In fact, Lenin cites the annexation of

Puerto Rico by the U.S. in 1898 as one of the important events marking the beginning of the "era of imperialism" and the beginning of annexations in the "epoch of imperialism."

Our Detroit authors try to say that the RU "might" try to characterize Puerto Rico as a "nation of a new type," and say that it, too, is a "particular and internal state problem" where "right of self-determination is not at the heart of the question." This, they exclaim, "is hardly objective reality!" Very good!

Indeed, this is not objective reality, but neither is the reality of the Black nation in the U.S.—or even in the "Black Belt" alone—the same as the objective reality of Puerto Rico. Our dogmatists "might" confuse this, but the RU doesn't. Are the Puerto Rican people a clear minority in Puerto Rico? Is Puerto Rico not a colony of U.S. imperialism—and wouldn't it remain so, even if it was declared a "state" (after all, the Portuguese colonialists have long called Angola an "overseas province")? ¹⁴ Are the Puerto Rican workers on the island part of the same single multi-national working class as workers in the U.S., in the same way that Black workers in the U.S. are? These questions answer themselves, and expose the inability of our Detroit dogmatists to even begin to grasp and apply the Marxist method, or to comprehend anything but scattered bits and pieces of "objective reality."

Self-determination is absolutely at the heart of the struggle of the Puerto Rican nation. Only through "wresting control" of the territory of Puerto Rico can the people of that nation win liberation, and only after that is done can they begin to build socialism there.

Under these conditions, even if there were no struggle in Puerto Rico for independence (which, of course, there is) it would be the duty of communists there to build such a movement. If, under those conditions, the communists restricted themselves to fighting this or that manifestation of imperialist oppression—for example police brutality—without linking this to the struggle for liberation and eventually socialism, they would be reformists and "straight up opportunists," just as, in the U.S., if the communists restrict themselves to fighting against particular manifestations of national oppression, without linking this to the struggle to overthrow the imperialists, this, too, would clearly be reformism and opportunism. But, let us repeat it once again, the overthrow of U.S. imperialism in the U.S. means a single stage proletarian revolution throughout the country, and not a two-stage and two-part revolu-

¹⁴ At the time this article was written Angola was still a colony of Portugal. Since then, as a result of a long armed struggle, it gained formal independence from Portugal, but was turned into a battlefield between the U.S. and USSR, each doing the actual fighting through proxy and mercenary forces. At the present time the Soviet social-imperialists hold the upper hand, with as many as 20,000 Cuban troops stationed in Angola, armed with Soviet weapons and carrying out Soviet social-imperialist aims.

tion—new-democratic in the “Black Belt,” and proletarian-socialist in the rest of the country.

This, of course, does not eliminate the national question, or do away with the struggle against national oppression. Only by merging the movement of the oppressed nationalities against imperialist oppression of them as peoples, with the overall movement of the multi-national working class, can socialist revolution be achieved. And, as we said, upon seizing power the proletariat will be faced with the very complicated question of really establishing equality between nationalities and working out the forms of self-government of the various oppressed nationalities.

Since this can only be solved in accordance with the felt needs and interests of the masses, the use of force by one section of the class against others, and specifically by white workers against the masses of oppressed nationalities, must and will be renounced. As we stressed, no one can predict exactly how this will be worked out, but Black control of the “Black Belt” cannot be insisted on and is not at the heart of the fight for Black liberation.

What can and must be insisted on is that the ruling proletariat will adopt special measures to overcome the oppression and inequality that the capitalist system in this country has enforced on the minority nationalities. It is the duty of communists, especially white communists, to mobilize the working class to fight against this oppression now and to prepare it to completely smash national oppression and overcome all national inequality after seizing power. This, as we see it, is the correct, proletarian line and approach to the national question in the concrete conditions of the U.S. today.

The last leg our Detroit dogmatists try to stand on is the argument that, by saying that the Black national question in the U.S. has always had unique features, different from other oppressed nations, we are not only promoting “American exceptionalism” in general but aiding the modern-day revisionists in particular. For example, they say, the RU is falling in with the stand that the “CP” has taken on this question, since the time of the ’50s when it went thoroughly revisionist.¹⁵

First off, it must be said that the Black national question in the U.S. has always had unique features. For example, Harry Haywood noted that “The uniqueness of the Negro problem in the United States lies in the fact that the Negro was left out of the country’s general democratic transformation.” (*Negro Liberation*, p. 143, footnote) And the 1930 Comintern Resolution speaks of the “peculiar nature” and “particularly oppressive” character of the Black national question at that time, because of the history and

¹⁵ This paragraph was not entirely clear as it appeared in RP 6, because in the printing part of the paragraph was omitted. It has been rewritten here from the original outline and notes.

the survivals of slavery.

But what makes the conditions new and unique today is the very transformation of the national question which we have dealt with at length. Genuine Marxist-Leninists must base themselves on a concrete analysis of these concrete conditions, no matter how much it may displease the dogmatists, because it is the masses of people and the struggle for socialism that matters, not the “feelings” of the dogmatists, or any other opportunists.

As for unity with the revisionist CP line, it is really the dogmatists who aid and act as a cover for the CP on this question, and who really have objective unity with the revisionist stand. The CP notes the basic changes in the conditions of Black people since WW2, and on this basis does two things. First, they say that the former position of the Comintern and the CP itself was incorrect—when, in fact, this did provide the basis for a revolutionary struggle of Black people at the time it was formulated, even though the question of self-determination did not prove in the practice of the CP, even in its revolutionary days in the ’30s, to be as much a focus as the Comintern Resolutions had anticipated.

Second, the CP today (with no regard for consistency) takes the position that since these changes have taken place, there is no longer any basis for a *revolutionary* movement of Black people against national oppression, but only a reformist struggle to “defend democracy” and the gains of the “Civil Rights Decade” from the “ultra-rightists” in the ruling class. The CP presents the Black people’s struggle not as an integral part of the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat, for the smashing of the imperialist state, but as a part of the “anti-monopoly coalition” to “curb the power of the monopolies.” (See for example, *Strategy for a Black Agenda*, by Henry Winston, especially the last two chapters.)

And what alternative do our dogmatists offer to this position? With only a very thin “revolutionary” cover they, too, present the Black liberation struggle as essentially a democratic question—“land to the tiller” and right of self-determination in the “Black Belt.” But more than that, they insist that the *only basis* for a “revolutionary” struggle of Black people is to fight for control of the territory and “landed property” of the “Black Belt.”

Since this no longer conforms to the actual concrete conditions, as we have shown, and since it therefore cannot be the actual basis for the revolutionary struggle of Black people, it offers no alternative at all in the real world to the revisionist line, and in fact only strengthens the revisionist CP and aids it in liquidating the national question. By comparison with our dogmatists, the CP *seems* at least to be basing itself on reality—whereas in fact, it is only trying to reconcile Black people, and the masses of oppressed and exploited people as a whole, to the present reality of imperialist rule. The dogmatists unite with them in this, and with a “revolutionary”

knife cut the proletarian heart out of the Black liberation struggle.

The real alternative to the CP's revisionist line on the national question is not to try to drag things back to the past, but to build on the present struggles of Black people, and to lead them to the future—socialist revolution. It is to show, in a living way, how the present position of the Black masses—overwhelmingly workers, part of the single multi-national proletariat—puts them in a very powerful strategic position not only to fight against their national oppression, but to unite with the whole class in this struggle, and in the overall struggle against all oppression and exploitation and for proletarian revolution. To show how the caste-like oppression of Black people within the class, and the oppression and the structure of white supremacy that has been historically rooted in the development of capitalism in this country, can only be thoroughly rooted out by the complete overthrow of this system. And to show, along with that, that liberation for Black people and all working people lies in the liberation of the productive forces through socialist revolution and the advance to communism. This, the revisionists will never do, and neither will the dogmatists; no matter how much “propaganda” they put out calling for socialism but divorcing socialism from the actual conditions and the living struggles of the masses.

PROLETARIAN IDEOLOGY, PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST DEVIATIONS ON THE NATIONAL QUESTION

From all that has been said, it is clear that the Black people's struggle is not, in its essential thrust, a movement for independence, for the right of political secession in the “Black Belt.” It is not a “patriotic” struggle in the sense of being a struggle, in essence, for “liberation of the homeland,” the territory of the “Black Belt” south. And this is why, as we said in National Bulletin 13, Mao's statement that “in wars of national liberation patriotism is applied internationalism,” cannot be applied to the Black liberation struggle in the same way as it could in China. At the same time, as we have also stressed, Black communists must, of course, stand and fight for the liberation of Black people, as well as the whole class.

The Detroit paper's treatment of the question of revolutionary nationalism (as well as its confused and self-contradictory analysis of the role of the Black bourgeoisie) is really just a rehash of the arguments of the BWC, which we have already answered (especially in “Marxism vs. Bundism”), and so there is no need to deal with most of these arguments again in this paper.

One inconsistency of the Detroit paper, on the role of the Black bourgeoisie in relation to the question of self-determination, is significant. The Detroit authors argue that the Black bourgeoisie

will never raise the demand for self-determination. At the same time, of course, they insist that the Comintern Resolutions still apply.

But the Comintern Resolution of 1930 says that if the proletariat “has come into power in the United States, the Communist Negroes will come out not for but against separation.” Why? Because, under these conditions, “the bourgeois counter-revolution, on the other hand, will then be interested in boosting the separation tendencies in the ranks of the various nationalities in order to utilize separatist nationalism as a banner for the bourgeois counter-revolution against the consolidation of the proletarian dictatorship.” According to the logic of our dogmatist authors, this “bourgeois counter-revolution” would certainly include the Black bourgeoisie, and it would be exactly the Black bourgeoisie in league with the imperialists who would then be raising the demand, not just for self-determination, but for actual separation.

Under today's conditions, the question of separation would only be possible when the proletariat has come into power. We do not think that the Black bourgeoisie is simply a counter-revolutionary agent of the imperialists, but is built up, on the one hand, and held down, on the other, by the ruling class. Therefore, the Black bourgeoisie has two aspects—the tendency to ally with the imperialists, and the tendency to ally with the masses in opposing the imperialists. The Black bourgeoisie, or at least sections of it, should be considered a possible, though vacillating, ally of the proletariat, not an absolute enemy.

But at the time of seizure of power by the proletariat, it will be exactly bourgeois forces among Black people, partly for their own concern for securing a market, and partly because of the influence of the imperialists, that are most likely to raise the demand for separation. Even Black bourgeois forces that united in the struggle to overthrow the imperialists may then raise this demand. And they will undoubtedly have some influence among the Black masses. This is a major reason why the *right* of self-determination must be upheld, but why, on the other hand, under present and foreseeable circumstances, *actual separation* would be a step backward.

Finally, having examined that confusion created by the Detroit paper, it is important to deal with one last distortion raised by our Detroit authors—the question of white chauvinism, bourgeois nationalism among the oppressed nationalities, and which constitutes the main danger. The Detroit paper says not only that white chauvinism is the main danger, but that it is another sign of the RU's white chauvinism that we spend more time combatting bourgeois nationalism among Blacks than white chauvinism among whites. Again, all we get from our Detroit authors is bourgeois logic.

In the working class and society as a whole white chauvinism (or racism) is clearly the main danger, the most dangerous form

of bourgeois ideology on the national question, because it represents a unity with the bourgeoisie of the oppressing nation, the imperialists. The RU, as well as all genuine communists, directs the main blow against white chauvinism; in particular, our white comrades emphasize the struggle against white chauvinism, while our comrades from the oppressed nationalities emphasize the struggle against the bourgeois nationalism of their own nationality.

But several points have to be made here. First, the fact that white chauvinism is the main danger in society as a whole, does not automatically make it the main danger in the ranks of the communists. In China before liberation, the main problem among the masses, overall, was a tendency toward defeatism, toward doubting that the landlords, imperialists and bureaucrat capitalists could actually be overthrown. But, in the Communist Party of China at various times, adventurism, based on expectations of very quick victory, became the main danger rather than conservatism. (Adventurism, of course, has in common with conservatism that it actually fails to rely on the masses, but it is nevertheless of a different form of opportunism than conservatism, or open defeatism.)

The communists, the vanguard, while they must be rooted among the masses and learn from the masses, do not have the same consciousness as the masses, do not merely reflect the understanding of the masses. This is a point which our dogmatists ought to understand, since they are forever talking about the role of the "conscious element" and the difference between the masses and the communists—their error, of course, lies in raising this difference to a principle and divorcing the communists from the masses.

In recent years in the U.S. communist movement—and here we are talking about the anti-revisionist forces—the main political and ideological deviation on the national question has not been white chauvinism (even though white chauvinism has remained the main danger among the masses and has significant influence, of course, within the communist movement). But the main deviation in the communist movement has been the tendency to tail after the bourgeois nationalism of the oppressed nationalities¹⁶ (of course, for

¹⁶ The analysis here of the main deviation on the national question refers in particular to those groups and individuals who stated opposition to the revisionism of the CP, USA and the rulers of the Soviet Union and who called for a new party in the U.S. on this basis. Hence the use of the terms "communist movement" and "anti-revisionist forces" no longer apply in the same way, since on the one hand most of these groups have completely degenerated into opportunism and on the other hand the Party of the working class, the RCP, has since been formed.

At the time this article was originally published (June, 1974) it was certainly the case that among what is broadly referred to as the "communist movement" the tendency to tail after the bourgeois nationalism of the oppressed nationalities was definitely the main deviation on the national question—and this had been the main deviation within the RU for some time before that as well. And this remains the case with most opportunist so-called "communist" groups in the U.S. today—such as the OL, WVO and others. But this question of main deviation, like every other question, must be treated dialecti-

whites to tail after bourgeois nationalism also has an aspect of chauvinism, and we'll return to this point shortly). This is so because in the U.S. in the past period, revolutionary nationalist movements and forces have sprung up at a time when the level of struggle, consciousness and unity of the working class as a whole has not yet been very developed. At the same time the roots of the communist forces in the working class, and their foundation in Marxism-Leninism also have not been very developed. And the bourgeoisie, panicked by the revolutionary movements of the oppressed nationalities, has put tremendous effort into building up petty bourgeois and bourgeois forces among these peoples and promoting bourgeois ideology, especially in the form of bourgeois nationalism.

Under these circumstances, it was inevitable that nationalist ideology would tend to dominate in these movements—and in the revolutionary movement generally, which has been tremendously influenced by the struggles of the Black people and other oppressed nationalities. But along with this, there has been the tendency in the revolutionary movement not to struggle against nationalist ideology and, instead, to equate it with proletarian ideology, or even raise it above proletarian ideology. This is what must be combated in the communist movement, while uniting with the tremendous revolutionary thrust of the struggles of the masses of oppressed nationalities.

Those who have fallen into dogmatism and bourgeois nationalism cannot, of course, grasp this or carry it out. For example, the BWC attacks certain "white chauvinists" (and obviously they are referring to the RU) who "say that Black nationalism and separatism are growing among Black people and this is a bad sign." The BWC adds this comment: "Of course Black nationalism and separatist tendencies exist and will continue to grow within the Black community as long as Black people are oppressed by U.S. imperialism." (See *The Black Liberation Struggle, The Black Workers Congress and Proletarian Revolution*, p. 10)

BWC has missed the point. What concerns the RU, and all genuine communists, is not so much that bourgeois nationalism and separatism is growing among Black people. What concerns us is that these tendencies are growing among some, and certainly not all, Black communists, as exemplified by BWC itself. And to the degree that this is the case, this will only further the growth of these tendencies among the Black masses. This is not the rising trend

and not something fixed and unchanging, or something which is the same in all situations and in every context. As the article points out, the main deviation among the masses of people on this question is definitely white chauvinism. Further, within the ranks of the genuine Marxist-Leninists, while the tendency to tail after the bourgeois nationalism of the oppressed nationalities may indeed be the main deviation at times, the opposite tendency—to tail after white chauvinism and liquidate the national question—is overall the main danger to combat.

among Black communists, but it is one which still has a strong influence, exactly because it has not been systematically struggled against in the past.

As Stalin wrote in 1934, "The deviation towards nationalism is the adaption of the internationalist policy of the working class to the nationalist policy of the bourgeoisie . . . There is a controversy as to which deviation represents the major danger: the deviation towards Great-Russian nationalism, or the deviation towards local nationalism? Under present conditions, this is a formal, and therefore, a pointless controversy. It would be absurd to attempt to give ready-made recipes suitable for all times and for all conditions as regards the major and minor danger. Such recipes do not exist. The major danger is the deviation against which we have ceased to fight, thereby allowing it to grow into a danger to the state." (Stalin, "Report to the 17th Congress of the CPSU(B)")

The "present conditions" Stalin refers to, included, of course, the fact that the working class was in power in the Soviet Union and had overthrown the imperialist system and its national oppression in that country (though, of course, it had not yet eliminated all vestiges of national inequality, all remnants left over from capitalist and Czarist oppression). But Stalin's general guideline: "The major danger is the deviation against which we have ceased to fight"—applies to the situation within the communist movement—whether or not the proletariat is in power. And, in the recent history of the U.S. communist movement, the deviation that has not been fought as much against is the deviation towards the bourgeois nationalism of the oppressed nationalities. This is shown in the very fact that within the communist movement itself it has often been enough to label a statement "racist" or "chauvinist" in order to avoid any real analysis or principled struggle.

Does this mean that we must ignore or downplay the struggle against white chauvinism, at least within the communist movement? No, it absolutely does not mean that. We must intensify this struggle. But, as we have stressed in the struggle against the "Bundist" line, we must carry this struggle out, in the communist movement and among the masses, *with a correct class stand*. As National Bulletin 13 points out, this has often not been the stand of RU comrades (and this holds true, we believe, for other forces in the communist movement as well) in combatting white chauvinism among the masses. In fact, this struggle has tended to take on the form of hostility towards white workers and tailing behind the spontaneous consciousness and attitudes of Black and other minority workers.

This last aspect is, on the part of whites, a form of white chauvinism—a liberal and patronizing attitude. But it would be a serious error to define the whole tendency in these terms and not to see that tailing after bourgeois nationalism among Blacks and adopting

an anti-white worker stand comes from the general anti-working class baggage of the petty bourgeoisie which still has considerable influence in the communist movement. And it comes out of the character of the revolutionary movement in recent years, which has been heavily influenced by nationalist ideology in the way that we summarized earlier. It is this "tide" within the communist movement itself that not only the RU, but all genuine communists must "go against," while continuing and intensifying the struggle against white chauvinism, in connection with the struggle against all national oppression.

Our Detroit dogmatists distort all this in their paper, and even invent statements to attribute to the RU, in order to claim that the RU doesn't think it is important to fight white chauvinism, even among the masses. We have already answered their distortions around self-determination (and that answers their inventions of what RU cadre supposedly say on that question), but the following invention is even more crude. According to these imposters, the stand of RU cadre is: "We must not focus on the weaknesses of white workers, on disunity. We must not emphasize racism and national chauvinism unless it takes on a really blatant—'kill the niggers'—form. Instead our job is to point to the unity that is developing, and bring these examples forward."

Please, blessed dogmatists, don't put words into our mouths—they are bad enough coming out of your own. (And here we should note that these authors were suspended from the RU not because they took a dogmatist stand, but because this opportunist line led them to violate the discipline of the organization, to refuse to carry out struggle within the organization according to democratic centralism, and, instead, to spread distortions and slander about the RU line and work, as typified by their paper.) But let's look at their invention above.

First, anyone who actually examines the propaganda, agitation and mass work of the RU knows that we consistently combat racism and national chauvinism, whether blatant, or less overt. The whole history of the RU has been marked by this struggle, linked with the struggle against national oppression.

Was it chauvinism, or struggling against chauvinism and national oppression when the RU took up the support of the Black Panther Party and the defense of its leaders when the BPP was playing a revolutionary role? Was it chauvinism, or the struggle against chauvinism when the RU took up the struggle against the PL¹⁷ line of

17 PL refers to Progressive Labor Party, which was formed in the mid-'60s with a line proclaiming opposition to the revisionism of the CP, USA and the Soviet Union and support for the revolutionary role of China. PL soon degenerated, however, coming out in opposition to revolutionary struggle, including the revolutionary struggle of the Black people in the U.S. In 1971, PL finally attacked China openly. Its influence in the U.S. revolutionary movement has consistently dwindled since the late '60s, though from time

attacking all national liberation struggles and claiming that “all nationalism is reactionary”? Is it chauvinism, or the struggle against chauvinism and national oppression that has led the RU to support struggles for open admissions and “third world studies” on the campuses, to fight discrimination on the job, police brutality, and other forms of national oppression? Was it chauvinism, or the fight against chauvinism and national oppression when the RU played a leading role recently in organizing struggle against “Operation Zebra” in the Bay Area? We are not “taking credit” for all these struggles, though we have played an important part. The point is not to “take credit” but to point out the actual role and history of the RU in the struggle against national oppression, and the correct way to struggle against chauvinism and national oppression—all of which is so thoroughly and shamelessly distorted by our dogmatist defectors.

But let's look deeper at their statement. Is it wrong to “point to the unity that is developing and bring these examples forward”? No, it is absolutely correct, and this is a very important part of combatting chauvinism and raising the class consciousness of white and minority nationality workers. Our Detroit authors don't agree with this, because they think the only way to carry out the struggle against white chauvinism is to adopt an anti-white worker (and really an anti-Black worker and completely anti-working class) stance. They aren't interested in learning from examples of how unity can be forged in the struggle against the imperialist enemy—in short, they aren't interested in building the revolutionary unity of the class for socialist revolution.

This is shown, for example, in the way they blow the Yokinen Trial all out of proportion and attribute “magical wonders” to it. August Yokinen, a Finnish-American worker and member of the Communist Party, USA, was expelled from the Party in 1931 for white chauvinism at a trial attended by thousands of people in Harlem. (He was re-admitted to the Party six months later on the basis of actively joining the struggle against the oppression of Black people and taking up the fight against white chauvinism—this was the recommendation of the “workers' jury” that expelled Yokinen.)

From the pamphlet summarizing the trial, it is clear that Yokinen was guilty of serious chauvinist acts—refusing Blacks admittance to a dance at the Finnish-American workers' hall in Harlem, and stating that he didn't want them to use the facilities, especially the baths. He certainly should have been seriously disciplined by the Party.

But our Detroit authors go out to lunch when they try to say that without the Yokinen trial the Party would not have taken up

to time it is still able to play some role as bourgeois agents and wreckers within various struggles.

the defense of the Scottsboro Boys. Before this trial, the Party had plunged into the Gastonia, North Carolina strike,¹⁸ around which it defeated the Lovestone line in the Party and raised the struggle against the oppression of Black people, including the right of self-determination (though this was raised in a kind of hokey way without much relation to the actual struggle). Before the Yokinen trial the Party had already established the *Southern Worker*, organized unemployed struggles, uniting Black and white workers, and begun building the Sharecroppers' Union. At the same time as it had carried out this work in the south, it had actively engaged in struggles in the north against discrimination and other oppression of Black people.

In fact, our Detroit authors basically misrepresent the Party's work during the '30s around the Black national question. If our dogmatists were at least consistent they would condemn rather than praise the CP during this period, because as it turned out the Party did not make the question of self-determination the main basis of its work around the Black people's struggle. It did not, because, while the question of self-determination was more central than it is today, and while the Party upheld it as a right, self-determination did not become a question around which masses of people, Black or white, could be mobilized in struggle.

It was mainly the work of the Party in building struggle against lynching, sharecropping exploitation, discrimination and other forms of national oppression, as well as the general struggle against class oppression, that drew large numbers of Black people and workers of all nationalities to the Party's banner in the '30s. This was true before and after the Yokinen trial. In fact, without this concrete work, the Yokinen trial would have been a complete farce, simply another Madison-Avenue promotion job—and as it was, it had a strong aspect of that.

The dangers of one-sidedly promoting the “Yokinen trial model” can be seen by examining the so-called campaign against white chauvinism that the CP carried out in the late '40s and early '50s, which divorced the struggle against white chauvinism from the mass struggle against national oppression and went to ridiculous extremes of “purifying the soul.” This so-called campaign was guided by Liu Shao-chi's writings on self-cultivation.¹⁹ They were printed

¹⁸ The Gastonia strike involved about 5000 textile workers in 1929 outraged over poverty wages and killing speedup. It was met with brutal repression and, despite heroic resistance by the workers, was finally broken. But it acted as a spark igniting strikes among textile workers in particular in many parts of the south.

¹⁹ Liu Shao-chi, a revisionist renegade in top leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, was exposed during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in that country in the mid and later '60s. The bourgeois headquarters he had built upon within the Party and state apparatus was smashed by this mass upsurge. One of the main bases of Liu Shao-chi's revisionism was his theory of “self-cultivation,” which divorced the question

and distributed in as many as nine editions throughout the Party during this campaign. In fact, this campaign was really a cover for pulling back from any involvement in the mass struggles of the Black people and the working class as a whole. That is exactly what self-cultivation is—"fighting bourgeois ideology" and making yourself a "good communist" in isolation from the needs and struggles of the masses.

This may be just what is to be done, according to dogmatists, who make a principle out of ignoring the concrete conditions and actual needs of the masses, and of divorcing themselves from the struggles of the masses. But to genuine Marxist-Leninists, the struggle against white chauvinism, as well as against bourgeois nationalism and all bourgeois ideology, must be linked with the mass struggle against national and class oppression and with ideological struggle within the communist movement to achieve a correct line and programme and to lead the mass movement to socialist revolution.

As we said at the beginning, the national question, and the Black national question in particular, is central and decisive to achieving proletarian revolution and socialism in this country. At this point in the development of the communist movement, forging clarity and unity around a correct line on the national question is a crucial part of uniting all who can be united around a Marxist-Leninist line and programme to form a genuine vanguard Party. And the struggle against the dogmatist line represented by the Detroit paper --which is extremely rightist in essence--is an important step for the communist movement in breaking with the dead hand of the past, building a new Party based on Marxism-Leninism, capable of leading the masses, and merging the national and class struggles to overthrow imperialism and build a new world, without national oppression or exploitation of any kind.

of being a "good communist" from the struggle of the working class to overthrow capitalism, establish the dictatorship of the proletariat, build socialism and continue the revolution to achieve communism. His self-cultivation idea of a good communist was not méant to serve the revolutionary struggle but to serve the selfish interests of a handful in gaining power and accumulating wealth for themselves—using their positions in the Communist Party and the socialist state and cultivating a reputation as "good communists" as capital to establish themselves as new exploiters of the masses, a new bourgeoisie over the masses.



Volume 1, Number 2
May 1, 1977

the COMMUNIST

*Theoretical Journal of the Central Committee
Of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA*

- **On the Relationship Between the Forces and Relations of Production and the Base and Superstructure**
- **Communism Not Pan Africanism Is the Guide to Socialist Revolution and Black Liberation**
- **Reformist and Revolutionary Views of Capitalist Crisis** A Critique of "New Marxism"
- **Anatomy of a Puerile Leftist Sect**
The Religious Disorder of the Workers Viewpoint Organization
- **Living Socialism and Dead Dogmatism**
The Proletarian Line and the Struggle Against Opportunism on the National Question in the U.S.

the COMMUNIST

Volume 1, Number 2

CP

Published and Distributed by
RCP Publications
P.O. Box 3486 Merchandise Mart
Chicago Illinois 60654



\$2