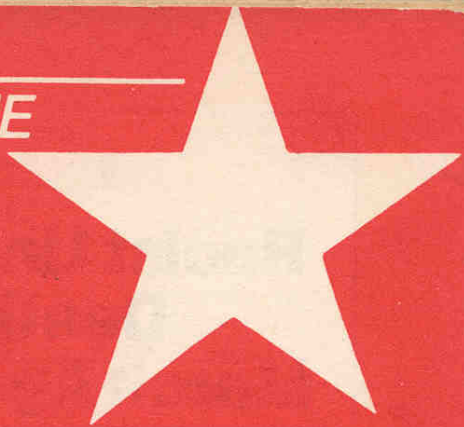


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*Road to Revolution (IV):  
The Fight for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*

**A  
COMMUNIST  
MANIFESTO  
1982**



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*(thanks to J for scanning, 5/01)*

# ROAD TO REVOLUTION IV

## A Communist Manifesto (1982)

Despite the bosses' whining denials, communism thrives today in the Progressive Labor Party. In 1848, Karl Marx wrote in the *Communist Manifesto*, "A specter is haunting Europe, the specter of communism." He was right! And now that specter haunts the bosses of the world. The struggle between bosses and workers has dominated the past century. Workers have made their greatest advances, such as the Russian and Chinese revolutions, under the leadership of communists.

Although capitalism has been restored to Russia and China, the "specter of communism" still haunts the world's bosses. The battle between bosses and workers rages everywhere. In order to survive, capitalism, the bosses' racist profit system, must exploit *all* workers and must super-exploit some. This greed for maximum profit sharpens the oppression of workers in every country. Even in a very industrialized nation such as the U.S., workers suffer mass unemployment, racism and even enslavement. The bosses' government harasses undocumented workers, rounds some up for deportation, and jails others in rotten concentration camps.

Millions of workers are cold, hungry, homeless. Many burn or freeze to death in slum housing. Tens of millions of young workers, especially black, Latin, Asian and Native American, are unemployed. Millions of these youth will never find work in capitalist society. Older workers are thrown out like garbage when they no longer have value to some boss. Capitalism has failed miserably to provide the basic necessities of life for hundreds of millions of workers around the world

Like all thieves, bosses have no honor among themselves. They are constantly falling out. U.S. rulers have plundered the world in the last century. Now they are losing ground. Bosses from Western Europe, Japan and especially the Soviet Union now threaten their stolen billions and their empire. This dog-fight that is leading to World War III is already causing smaller wars in Central America and the Middle East.

To make workers, soldiers, students and others follow their plans for war, the rulers are imposing forms of fascism around the world. In the U.S., as elsewhere, the greedy bosses are ripping away reforms that workers have fought hard to win. The rulers hope in this way to amass more billions to strengthen their military machines. Capitalists have turned the world into an armed camp so that each one can keep or maximize profits. To make more money, these bosses will fight to the last drop of our blood. *The only solution is communist revolution under the banners of the Progressive Labor Party.* Otherwise, we will suffer capitalism's endless wars and oppression. Capitalism means the ruination of our class, our families, our friends. *Only world-wide communism offers worker, soldiers, and students an alternative to the misery of capitalism.*

Our Party fights for an egalitarian, communist society under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Capitalism is the dictatorship of the bosses. They hold power through their political parties, their cops, their courts, and their military. They pretend to be democratic, but their "democracy" is a fraud. They point to the secret ballot as the height of democracy. But in the U.S., all parties except the PLP represent the bosses. For us workers bosses' elections mean "heads they win, tails we lose." The idea of bosses yielding power peacefully is a myth. They will never allow themselves to be voted out of office.

Under the banners of its revolutionary communist party, the working class must arm itself and fight to win power.

After the Party has led to the seizure of power, the working class must remain armed. To win and hold power, the working class must develop its own Red Army. After workers win political emancipation in one area, the bosses and their agents there and elsewhere will attempt a comeback. Workers need this Red Army to take the offensive against the bosses and crush them. When workers' militias, which will exist everywhere to defend the revolution, need help, the Red Army will provide it.

The Red Army of an area where workers hold power will also assist workers fighting for revolution in other areas. As communism spreads across the world and classes eventually disappear, the need for violence by workers and their party against the capitalist enemy will diminish. This development will correspond to the collapse of the capitalists and their ideas. When workers and communist principles rule the world, when capitalist forces have become extinct, the need for workers' violence will wither away.

We want a society whose workers run everything in the interests of the world's workers. We want a system that encourages every worker to become involved in running society; that trains everyone to act for the common good and does not indoctrinate people to "look out for number one;" that opposes placing selfish interests above the social needs. We want society to help each person grow, to correct mistakes, to encourage honest evaluation and self-evaluation. We want a system that stamps out such capitalist ideas as racism, male chauvinism, anti-communism and anti-worker attitudes. We want to wipe out the drug addiction that ruins millions of young workers' lives. We want to defeat religion. Religion serves only the interests of the rulers, who use it to mystify workers so that conditions stay as they are. We want a system that corrects or punishes capitalist behavior.

We need communist democracy, based on democratic centralism. This system requires criticism and self-criticism of what we do and don't do. We fight to defeat anti-collective behavior and to help each other become better communists. Capitalist "democracy" means "doing your own thing." Each person supposedly has freedom to do what he or she wants. Capitalist "free speech" really protects racist crap and anti-communism. Capitalist "freedom" means bosses are free to screw us all.

In capitalist society, only the bosses are free--free to hire and fire, free to pillage and plunder, free to make our class fight for their profits. In contrast, democratic centralism, under which we operate, encourages full and open discussion in the exclusive interest of workers and their allies. We will allow no freedom to exploit workers.

Within the party at all times, and within society at large after the revolution, the role of central leadership is decisive. The working class requires a general staff that places the victory of communism above all other goals and that fights to make the party the leader of society.

After the leadership has guaranteed full and open discussion of policy, every party member and worker must develop the discipline to accept and carry out the collective decision. Even those who disagree must hold to this discipline. The effort to put party decisions into action must be united everywhere. Later we can see clearly the rightness or wrongness of decisions, and, if need be, make adjustments or scrap them. In this way, both majority and minority viewpoints will get a serious hearing.

Throughout the process of seizing, holding and expanding revolutionary power, workers need only one leading political force--the communist party. Before and during the revolution, tens of millions of workers, soldiers and students will join or support the communist party. **Only a party with such a mass base can successfully lead a revolution.** After the revolution, workers and their allies will not need a government separate from the party. Either such a government would be a rubber-stamp for the workers' mass party, or it would represent enemies of communism. Surely a rubber-stamp government is useless and deceptive. And workers must never again share power with class enemies. We propose that after the revolution, the party--composed of tens of millions of workers--

lead society.

We said above that the world's workers made great advances with the revolutions in Russia and China. We also said that these revolutions, which had established socialism, were reversed, and that now Russia and China are capitalist societies with new bosses. Marx and Lenin described socialism as the early stage of communism. These great revolutionaries doubted that the working class could move immediately from capitalism to communism. They and others believed that important concessions to capitalism and capitalist ideas were necessary to win enough people to socialist revolution. They thought socialism would eventually lead to communism.

Keeping the wage system was the greatest concession to capitalism. Under socialism, every worker got a wage. Your work determined your wage. Professionals made a lot more than those who worked with their hands. Among manual workers, the so-called skilled made more than the unskilled. Does this sound familiar? The motive for these inequalities was the mistaken belief that many workers had to be bribed to produce.

Wage differences reinforced commodity production--production for sale, for profit rather than for society's use or need. Goods could never be distributed according to collective need because some workers had greater purchasing power than others.

No matter how much well-intentioned planning society does, the wage system forces each worker to think of his or her work in selfish terms. Only communism can change that. **Communism will abolish the wage system.** In communist society, the principle "to each according to need" will be as basic as the principle "every man for himself" is to capitalism. Children will understand this from the moment their senses awaken.

Under communism, the principle of work will be: "from each according to commitment." People will work because they want to, because their class brothers and sisters around the world need their work--even as people fight in revolutionary wars not just for themselves but for their class. They will share in decision-making, including the distribution of goods and services according to society's needs. They will share shortage along with abundance. If there is selfishness--and there must be some--the party will struggle politically to overcome it, or, if necessary, punish it. However, the day-in, day-out basis of individualism--the wage system--will have been abolished.

The immediate establishment of a communist distribution system makes possible a new kind of party and a new relationship between the party and the rest of the population.

Communist distribution eliminates the material incentive for the emergence of new bosses corrupted by all sorts of privilege. Government or party officials, special workers, or artists will no longer receive more money for work that is supposedly "more important." The measure of work will have nothing to do with what people receive. People should and will get what they need, within the limits of what everyone can produce. Measuring work to set pay directly contradicts communism. The elimination of wages causes the social basis for privileges and a new class of bosses to disappear. For the first time in history, workers will receive a fair share of society's wealth, regardless of the work they do.

Communism will abolish socially useless forms of work that exist now only for capitalist profit. Communism will not need millions of lawyers, advertisers, or salespeople. In one stroke, it will do away with layers of needless government bureaucrats, as well as the hordes of petty supervisors and administrators who oversee and manage us for the bosses. It will free everyone to perform socially useful work, which is the source of true creativity. Capitalism creates the illusion that degenerate superstars and people who have best figured out how to screw others are "creative." The anti-working class values of the profit system pervert all cultures.

The communist organization of society requires the active commitment of millions of workers. Communism will not succeed unless people understand it, agree with it, and vow to make it succeed.

Ending the wage system will reduce the problems capitalism causes inside the working class. Racism, one of capitalism's greatest evils, exploits one worker to a greater degree than another. This super-exploitation and the super-profit from it lead to increased oppression of every worker. Marx said over 100 years ago that, "the worker in white skin can never be free as long as the worker in black skin remains in chains." At all stages of the revolutionary process, the party must lead an unyielding fight against every aspect of racism. However, only an egalitarian society that ends the exploitative wage system in the context of sharp anti-racist political and ideological class struggle can crush racism once and for all.

Failure to eliminate privilege will surely show up inside the communist party. Past socialist societies retained privilege, which quickly found its way into the party. Some party members and many leaders were often better off than others. This practice made many workers cynical by perpetuating the bosses' anti-Communist lie that all power corrupts. A communist society in which millions of party leaders and members live and share the same as everyone else will produce a better communist party. Such a party will develop the healthiest relations between itself and all workers. These relations will ultimately narrow the gap in commitment and political skill between leaders, members and workers at large.

Economic privilege in previous socialist societies maintained the gaps created by capitalism between mental and manual work. The children of professionals, party leaders, and better-paid workers went on to higher education. This practice perpetuated social inequality. In a communist society, the workplace will become the center of education. Students will become workers and workers, students. Workers may have many vocations, careers, trades, certainly more than one. Everyone will work with both brain and hands.

Having rid itself of the wage system, society can also wipe out the special oppression of women and male chauvinism, which serve only capitalism. In communist society, everyone will have the opportunity, the right, and the duty to work. The capitalist exploitation of women depends on the bosses' ability to degrade them culturally. The bosses can pay women less than men or even nothing at all as in the case of housework. Only the destruction of capitalism and the collective fight by men and women workers for communism can free women from this special exploitation. The revolution needs the militant leadership of working class women.

Since its founding, the Progressive Labor Party has fought against retreats from Marxism-Leninism, especially the practice of uniting with "lesser-evil" bosses, usually known as the liberals. All bosses want to keep capitalism; therefore, all bosses, whether liberal or conservative, are class enemies.

### ***COMMUNIST INTERNATIONALISM***

We oppose nationalism and fight for internationalism. By nationalism, the bosses mean that workers must respect capitalist borders. These borders are artificial; they exist to divide workers and keep different sets of bosses in power. Workers need no borders. Workers in one part of the world are not different from or better than workers in another. Nationalism creates false loyalties. Workers should be loyal only to other workers, never to a boss. We endorse the revolutionary slogan: "Workers of the world, unite!" Our Party is multi-racial; its members come from around the world. They all unite in the fight for revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

### ***NO MORE RETREATS!***

**Our members and friends will tolerate no more retreats from the basics of Marxism-Leninism, from communism.** Marx proved that an egalitarian communist society would inevitably develop. History shows no need to back away from communism. The bosses would have us believe that communism has failed. Only capitalism has failed.

The bosses use the examples of capitalist countries like Russia, China, and Poland to discredit communism. They cynically pretend these fascist returns to the profit system are communist societies. The bosses protest too much. They hate true communism with a vengeance because they fear it more than anything. If the bosses loathe communism, workers should love it.

Every compromise made by communists to capitalism ended in disaster. History proves that workers want a life free from capitalist exploitation, and that, much to the bosses' dismay, they will fight to the death for it. Workers need communist revolution, not reform. We are all learning from bitter experience that capitalism can never be reformed. It must be crushed.

From the caves of Yenan in China to the battle of Stalingrad in Russia, workers proved that they could fight and work together in a communist manner. We will have to rebuild a society severely disrupted by a third world war. Why should we keep any of capitalism's-deadly trappings in the process?

Our party has confidence in workers. However, we remain too timid in spreading communist ideas and practices among them. Some of us may retain illusions in capitalism or have fallen for the bosses' cynicism. The bosses pretend "human nature" can't change. They really mean that workers will endure capitalism forever. Bosses believe human instinct is capitalistic, that every one is born selfish, and that nature determines wealth and poverty. These ideas are false and vile. Workers have fought and shared for the common good over the centuries. tens of millions have long sought communism. The very thought makes the bosses tremble.

To lead a communist society, the party must win millions of workers into its ranks and develop close ties with millions of others. We must start now to build a base among all workers. In the course of revolutionary battle, millions of workers, soldiers and students will come over to communism. When the revolution and its communist ideas triumph, the party will already have won countless millions to launch a communist society, with no retreats to capitalism.

The growth of a large working-class communist party requires much more than handing out leaflets. It means organizing battles, large and small, against all the rulers' injustices. Within these battles, we must hold revolutionary ideas and goals in the forefront. Organizing for revolution means educating masses of workers, soldiers and students with communist ideas. To agitate successfully, to fight and win battles, to educate people politically, we must know workers very well. We must build long term relations that can lead to the total transformation of most individuals, including ourselves, as we become convinced that we can no longer live in the old way, that we can no longer tolerate capitalism.

For our Party to wipe out world capitalism and to prevent concessions to it by communists, we must have confidence in the international working class; and the international working class must have confidence in their party. This mutual confidence will develop only through long class struggle and political debate. Millions of worker-communists, living and working in an egalitarian society, will never permit a return to capitalism.

**The rulers fear communism most. Its specter still haunts them and will destroy them. Only the growth of the revolutionary party can ensure the future of the international working class. Our Party is no secret society.**

**The PLP is open to all workers, students and soldiers. JOIN US!**

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## **Under the Proletarian Dictatorship:**

# **For Communist Economics and Communist Power**

Three questions seem to define the essence of *Road to Revolution IV*. It is not surprising that those three questions have been the most controversial.

- Can we move to communist economic relations immediately following the seizure of power by the working class? By communist economic relations I mean "from each according to his ability, to each according to need."
- Will the Party be the ultimate holder of power during the dictatorship of the proletariat? What do we mean by "democratic centralism?"

Should such a system of communist economic relations, while still maintaining a dictatorship of the proletariat, a state with law, armies, etc., be called "socialist" or "communist" or something else?

## **WHEN CAN COMMUNIST ECONOMIC RELATIONS BE ESTABLISHED? WHEN SHOULD THEY?**

. The main argument against moving immediately to communist economic relations is that we supposedly could not win enough members of the working class to support such a system. The argument has been raised that it is idealist and anti-materialist to assume that workers will support communist relations when it has not yet been proved to them, by virtue of having a long period of state ownership of the means of production with differences in living standards still being maintained within the society.

An important point to remember is that giving more to one group of people necessarily means that another group of people will get less. The policy of "to each according to work" would mean that those who are unable to work would not enjoy as high a standard of living as those who are able to work harder. Handicapped people would presumably not have the same standard of living as engineers. Racial minorities generally have worse health under capitalism and would continue to suffer the effects of that capitalist oppression after a revolution. Adopting a policy of "to each according to work" would end up maintaining racial discrimination. It would also discriminate in favor of the physically strong and those who, for one reason or another, are able to contribute what others, at least at that point, might not be able to.

Some people might say that we are destroying the aspirations of those who want to "better themselves" by working a little harder and getting a little more. But that is just a new, revisionist version of the same old capitalist argument against communism -- that it doesn't allow the individual to express himself or herself. This argument poses as pro-human, pro-people, but in fact it is reactionary garbage. After a revolution, do any of us want to look some section of the working class directly in the face and explain why they are living at a lower standard of living than another group within the society?

Besides, for some time after a revolution we would concentrate our efforts on destroying the capitalists all over the

rest of the world. We want to win the working class of the U.S. to ally with the working class of the rest of the world. We do not want to win the working class of the U.S. to an attitude of "we got ours" or to the idea, that immediate material gains are what revolution is all about. Pushing that idea is just pushing nationalism, and that will inevitably take the form of some kind of racism against other workers. We must win U.S. workers to see that it is in their interest to help other workers overthrow their bosses, and that, otherwise, workers' rule in the U.S. will be overthrown. To permit inequality violates internationalism.

Many people might agree with the goal of equality, but still say that the rest of the working class can't be won to it, that it is idealist to think that people can be won by "moral" arguments.

There is a false debate going on, using the terms "material" incentives, versus "moral or political" incentives. The correct way to discuss this is "communist, collective, material, moral and political incentives" versus "capitalist, selfish, individualistic material incentives." We are not against improving the material lives of the working class. We are not pushing some nonsense religion. Those who argue that our appeal for communist incentives and against selfish-material incentives is an idealist, anti-materialist demand should know that they are making a phony argument. We are simply saying that it is wrong, it is deceptive, and it reinforces capitalism, to promise all kinds of immediate goodies to people.

We know that the power of the working class can create a world far more incredible, fantastic, magnificent, than all the science-fiction writers in the world could dream up together. This world will unlock the vast power of the human brain to create a world where the lifespan will be increased and other material changes will take place. But that is very different from promising people a color TV, or even steak, shortly after the revolution. Besides, capitalism breeds war, disease, etc. Eliminating those horrors on the way to a new world is, unquestionably, a very strong material incentive.

We are for communism because it works better. This is a very materialist argument. We will have better human relations, we will have a better material life, a better science, etc. under a communist system. We understand this materialist argument. Why do some people persist in thinking that other people cannot be won to this materialist argument?

This brings up a whole series of questions relating to the question "How are people won to communism?" and, in a broader sense, "What causes social change?" There is clearly a contradiction within Marx's and Engels' writing on this question.

Lenin had a contradictory line on nationalism, and we in PLP made the decision to adopt the "internationalist/dictatorship of the proletariat" side of the contradiction, rather than the "sometimes nationalist struggles can weaken imperialism" side. We feel that the side we have chosen is more consistent with the essence of Marx's and Engels' writings, but in any case that it is the principled position to take. Those revisionists who take Lenin's writings as the Bible, to be quoted word for word, were angry with us -- it was funny to watch them go through mental gymnastics trying to deal with the obvious contradictions within Lenin's line.

Well, Marx had contradictions within his work, too. It is thoroughly "Marxist" -- that is to say, scientific -- to acknowledge that Marx had contradictions. *Road to Revolution IV* does make a clean break with an aspect of Marx's line. There is no way to soft-pedal this difference. We are saying flat out that we disagree with some of Marx's writings.

One contradiction in Marx's writings centers on the question of how consciousness develops, the relationship of

productive forces to consciousness. This has been discussed at length in several Party bulletins and issues of *PL Magazine*, but it is still a fundamental question that ties directly into *Road to Revolution IV*. One side of the contradiction says that "communism will win because it works better; it is the best system for organizing human society, and people can be won to that understanding.

The other side' of the contradiction emphasizes the stages, of human society, and implies that each succeeding stage inevitably had to follow the previous stage of history. Each later stage of history was able to unlock more productive forces and the subordinate class was able to ally itself with the kind of system that would allow the productive forces to develop and produce more things for people. Consistent with this second side of the contradiction is the notion, very common in radical theory that "socialism will produce so many good things for so many people that the working class, and indeed, all of society, will see that collectivism works better than private ownership for producing things, and therefore there will be no reason to steal or to exploit because everyone will have everything that they need and there would be no reason to restore capitalism."

Each revolutionary class throughout history was, supposedly, won to its revolutionary position by seeing how the revolution could produce more things, a better world, for itself than the previous system. In this view, this is true for the working class as well, in its drive for communism.

## **IS COMMUNISM BETTER BECAUSE IT PRODUCES MORE?**

The second argument, which I'll call the "abundance" argument, has a certain amount of truth to it, but if taken too narrowly, it is simply wrong. Each successive system may have worked better than the system it replaced, but communism works better than any of them! The abundance argument has at least two basic problems:

- Who is to say what "abundance" really is? Many working-class people in the U.S. probably live at a higher standard of living than Marx might have predicted -- better health care, longer life span, shorter workday, indoor plumbing, electricity, cars: etc. Of course, a nuclear war can erase all that, but even if nuclear war were not imminent we would say that the U.S. working class needs a communist revolution. All of those material things constitute "abundance" on one level, yet we know that it is not enough, because we know of the potential for a better world. We also know that most of the world doesn't even have a fraction of what many U.S. workers have. But even if the whole world lived at this relatively "abundant" level, we would still be fighting to smash the system. The "abundance" by itself does not, and cannot, eliminate selfishness and class divisions.
- The other side of the coin is that there is always the possibility for more, and for better lives. There will always be some surplus to fight over if people believe that fighting for themselves selfishly is the key to success. In an immediate sense there are always limits. Even if technology produced a world where most people lived to be 200 years old with little illness, we would fight to overthrow that system if there were a group within that society exploiting and suppressing the productive, creative potential of another class within that world. There will never be "enough." There is always better and always more that can be achieved.

So the idea that achieving a certain high material level of society will automatically eliminate class antagonisms and contradictions is simply not true. Relative deprivation, not deprivation alone, is the driving force in the class struggle. Seeing the difference between the potential and the immediate will inspire humankind to try to better control nature for centuries after communism is achieved. The way that selfishness stands in the way of this is what wins people to accept communism. Some vaguely defined notion of "abundance" to be achieved by a rearrangement of society is not sufficient. No matter how high the level of society, some people will continue to

steal from other people unless the communist way of life is understood by the members of society to be the best way, and fought for and ingrained in the culture and daily lives of that society. Goodies won't eliminate greed.

In fact, even the scenarios of "abundance" are incorrect projections of the possibilities under capitalism, because capitalists must seek maximum profits, which means the maximum level of exploitation of the working class that they can get away with. Therefore, the whole idea of a capitalist society where "everyone has enough" (whether by the standards of Marx's time or of today) but some people have more than enough is impossible.

People will be won to communism, then, not by the promise of a specific set of personal material gains, but rather by an understanding that capitalism always breeds horrors such as war, and that communism holds the potential for a future of better physical, mental, and emotional health, a future of unlimited scientific development for the betterment of all people -- including, probably, most people alive today. But even if it takes longer, we'll fight because we know that we will win someday; the alternative is to be a part of this filth or a helpless victim of it.

Communism, as broadly defined by Marx, is the best way to organize the world, and has *always* been the best way to organize the world.

This is not saying that the world could have moved to Marxist communism in 800 A.D. The ideology, the scientific understanding that this was the best way to run the world, had not been developed among enough people. But even then it would have been the best way to run the world if it could have been done. Are we saying that the world could have moved from what Marx called "primitive communism" to the kind of world communism that we want? No, because consciousness had not developed sufficiently. Each successive political-economic system -- slavery, feudalism, capitalism -- unlocked more and more science, enabling more and more people to see the contradiction between the way that society was being run and the way society could be run.

The great progressive historical function of capitalism was to make it possible for enough people to finally understand the scientific truth that communism works best. In particular, capitalism was especially useful in weakening the hold of religion,

**Communism is the best way to organize the world. It has *always* been the best way to organize the world.**

superstition and fatalism as an anti-scientific set of ideology that prevented people from seeing the scientific truth that communism works best. But it was not the level of productive forces in themselves that created the social change.

Consider the following case. If a group of teenagers were dropped off on an uninhabited island with nothing but stone tools, what would be the best, most humane, most productive political-economic system to set up? The answer is communism! Would anyone say that they should first go through a period of slavery, then small farms and nomadic wandering and then later feudalism, and then capitalism and monopoly capitalism before they could realize that a system of "from each according to ability, to each according to need" is the system that would give the best life to the group members and allow the society to move forward? Of course not! Communism would obviously be the best system to set up.

Primitive communism was not Marxist communism. It was saturated with unscientific perceptions about how the

world worked. It was not the "low level of the material life" that made primitive communism unable to develop directly into Marxist communism -- it was the lack of consciousness. There was gravity before scientists gave it a name; there was fire before people learned how to make fire; and two people working together could produce more and better goods for both of them even before they understood it. And communism is, and was, the best, most humane, most efficient, most productive way to set up the world -- whether or not enough people understood that, and were willing to fight for it to make it come true.

Is this a denial of Marx's basic notion that capitalism was once historically progressive? No. It is true that capitalism was historically progressive because it smashed feudalism, especially the feudal myths and superstitions that were believed by many, and which stood in the way of seeing the raw exploitation that was going on, or of seeing the tremendous power of socially-organized labor. Capitalism, especially industrial capitalism, used the collective talents of the laboring classes in a qualitatively more profound and obvious way than any previous system, hence revealing the truth about collective approaches to production better and to more people. But even in a world without electricity, railroads, automobiles and large factories, communism would still be the best system to set up. The key question is one of consciousness -- "what would it take for people to understand this truth'?"

It is not even certain that capitalism was even "historically progressive" after 1848. The *Communist Manifesto* smashed through the lies and myths and laid the basis for the massive workers' movements that followed. Since then, and even today, probably 80 to 90 percent of all the people in the world have been grappling with the concepts of socialism and communism in a generally favorable way: trying to understand if it can work, and how, etc. Even in our daily lives, we see many examples of "to each according to need" being practiced by working-class people. When someone holds the door open for you, they don't usually say, "Well, you owe me one." Soldiers fight and die, workers go off to work and ruin their health at miserable jobs for their families, parents work their butts off trying to raise their kids properly, neighbors babysit in a crisis -- all this, not expecting to be paid back, but rather for some notion that people working together produces a better world. Sure, there are many counter-examples, but the fact is that a communist way of living is not so totally unnatural or against the grain of everyday life as the cynics argue.

**Well, if it is true that communism would be best, we should say it!** Period. Why settle for inequality, which absolutely will open the door to first just differences and then real classes, and eventually war, etc.? After a cancer is cut out of a body, would the doctor decide to reimplant just a bit of cancer on the theory that the body might have gotten used to the cancer and would not be prepared for the shock of a cancer-free life? Capitalism is that cancer.

In summary, moving directly to communist economic relations is allied with one aspect of Marx's theory, but is in clear contradiction to another part. We are holding to the line of communism, but we are rejecting the notion, which Marx sometimes stated, that "abundance" would somehow create a world where stealing would cease to be because everyone would have all they need. Hell, the rich capitalists have the most abundance, and they are the biggest crooks of all -- they never get enough!

The key to holding onto the egalitarian communist society is to win enough people to understand and be willing to fight for the principle that our lives would be much worse if society were based on inequality. This will mean that we will have to make fantastic changes in the area of culture, as well as economics. Capitalist culture screws people up. A man might not like to wash dishes, but enjoy cleaning and sharpening tools, for example. An autoworker might hate the job, but enjoy working on his or her own car. A student might hate writing a paper for school, but enjoy writing a letter to *Challenge!* What makes us like what we like and hate what we hate is only partly based on physical/material issues. Nobody likes pain, but most people actually enjoy activity that can be physically strenuous -- if we are not alienated from that labor. Alienation does not have to do with something being

unpleasant; it has to do with thinking that our effort, our activity, is not going for something that we feel is worthwhile. It might seem useless, or worse yet, it might seem that someone is taking our labor or time away from us and we, or people we love and care about are getting no benefit from it. Sometimes we wrongly feel alienated from something we should put more effort into, such as thinking that a certain political activity is "not really worth it" because "nothing will come of it" when really that activity, especially building strong personal-political ties with fellow workers, students and neighbors, is extremely important in the long run.

Capitalism defines us mainly as workers, but capitalism would like us to see ourselves mainly as consumers, in competition with other workers for goods. We are supposed to feel pride, self-esteem, in what we own and how much we consume -- to feel good if we have a newer car or bigger house than our neighbor. We are supposed to look at other workers as a means, as objects to manipulate in order to get what we want. Taken to the extreme, this produces thieves, rapists and killers who feel good about hurting other people. All capitalists, big and small, say they are against this, but they foster these basic cultural and philosophical ideas that lay the basis for these extremes. All of them do the same thing -- use workers as means, as objects to exploit for profit.

We have to reject all this garbage, and we have to win the working class to look upon all this as total garbage. Of course we want a better material life for people. But why feel pride if the bosses sucker you into wanting to own, or consume or look or act according to phony standards they set up precisely to blind us? A person with a very expensive car is not "freer;" running around with many women does not make a man "free" -- they are both prisoners, compulsively trying to overcome their insecurity, alienation, by trying to be "in." Who needs this crap? ,

We can, and will, win ourselves, and the working class, to a communist line. This line would not look with envy on someone

**Inequality will open the door first to differences, and then classes, and finally to defeat.**

who gets a luxury of some sort. On the contrary, just as in war-ravaged China and Russia, people would say, "who the hell is he or she to have all this extra when others are suffering?" The section of the working class that would not be the beneficiaries of inequality would be the source of power to prevent any group from getting more than the rest. We will rely on that section of the working class to prevent inequality from taking hold.

Eliminating the wage system will be very important. It would be impossible to create the system described above, especially the culture, if a wage system were maintained. A wage system would still necessarily have to maintain inequality. Furthermore, while it would still be possible to steal and exploit under a non-money system, the existence of money makes it much easier to steal, exploit, charge interest, etc., and it makes it much easier to hide this robbery. All living creatures are consumers; what makes us human is our productivity. People want to be productive in a non-alienated way. Communism will offer this to the human race, and I believe that the human race can, and will, choose this over the false promises inequality and selfishness offer, which always lead to exploitation, war and misery for the overwhelming majority.

## **SHOULD THE PARTY BE THE ULTIMATE HOLDER OF POWER?**

The second major point that some people raised in opposition to *Road to Revolution (IV)* had to do with what form the dictatorship of the proletariat will take. Road to Revolution IV asserts boldly that the Party would be the ultimate organizational expression of working class power, in addition to its primary role as political and

ideological leader. This worried some people who felt that power concentrated in the hands of the party would automatically create a situation such as happened in the USSR, where the party became a new ruling class.

Question\ included:

- How will the party deal with dissent?
- Will the party allow "freedom of expression" for people who disagree with the party?
- How will the working class protect itself from the party if the party becomes corrupt? .
- If the party commands a standing army, will it be easier for a corrupt party to suppress the working class?
- Who will have the final say?

The heart of the question is whether the party should make the basic decisions that run society, or whether some other group should make those decisions. To clear away the smoke, the real issue is the issue of "democratic centralism:" How do we guarantee that we can have centralism -- the will of the working class being carried out by all members -- while preventing a corrupt group from using centralism in an anti-working class way? Will a group of non-party people be allowed to have ultimate power over the decisions of the party if there is a disagreement? If there is no disagreement, then this issue is never going to come to a head. But if there is disagreement, should the party be allowed to use the threat of force in order to have its decisions carried out?

There is a false argument often used in discussing the role of centralism. Some people argue that the value of centralism is in its efficiency, but that this efficiency must be balanced off against some form of protection for the majority -- hence "democratic" centralism. "Democratic centralism" is seen as a "unity of opposites" -- a combination of democracy and centralism where each of them is used to prevent the other from going to the extreme. "Too much democracy would not be efficient, but too much centralism would lead to suppression of the rights of the people." **This whole line of thinking is completely wrong!**

It pretends to be dialectical, but is actually, in Lenin's words, "eclectic" -- another way of saying that it tries to solve a basic problem of struggle not by seeing how different forces interact and transform each other but rather by simply borrowing a little from one, a little from the other, and coming up with something that is not really accurate at all. Let us break down the two words -- "democratic" and "centralism" -- and see what is meant, or should be, by those terms.

The word "democratic" used in the context of "democratic centralism" is used in different ways. One meaning is that there should be full discussion of a proposal before a decision is made. Another meaning is that decisions should be made in the interests of the working class, and in a way that not only will benefit the working class, but also train more and more working-class people to contribute to the running of the society. A third meaning sometimes given to "democratic" is that there should be some sort of formal institutionalized process, usually some sort of voting, that should be done before a decision is finally made.

The word "centralist" means that after a decision is made, everyone should work to carry it out, whether or not they agreed with the decision. Furthermore, within the context of the party, it means that discussion and disagreement are allowed, but that it must be done in an open way, not in a secret way. Members cannot form private groups that hold private, closed meetings to discuss how to undermine a decision. Disagreements should be discussed only in the context .of party meetings. Otherwise, the member is saying that his highest loyalty is not to the party, but to a small group of associates.

I personally do not like the term "democratic" here. I think that it means too many things to too many different people. I prefer the term "communist centralism" because that gives a political-economic content to centralism -- it

means that all centralism is for the purpose of building a society free of privilege and exploitation, based on "from each according to his ability, to each according to need." and developing the consciousness of the people to be able to implement that. In any case, the first definition of "democratic" given above doesn't help clear the air at all. Everybody should agree with the idea that there should be full discussion as much as possible before a decision is made, so the first definition does not reveal the differences that people have on democratic centralism and how society should be run.

The second meaning is the one that I prefer. Decisions should be made that are to the benefit of the working class of the world, and that will encourage and develop greater and greater numbers of workers to take more of an active interest and participation in helping make the decisions. However, everybody who claims to be a communist, certainly all party members, would probably agree with this as well, so this definition also does not help reveal the differences.

The third meaning, that there should be some sort of voting process that is absolutely binding, and that has the final say, is where the controversy comes forward the sharpest. *Road to Revolution IV* says explicitly that the leadership, the party, wants to encourage direct working-class transformation of the society and direct working-class leadership of the society, but that, when push comes to shove, in an ultimate sense, the power of the society should rest in the hands of the party, rather than in the hands of a non-party group, or some sort of coalition between the party and non-communist forces.

Those who disagreed with the Road to Revolution IV formulation said that democracy is supposed to give the most freedom to the greatest number, and that the party would be going against democracy if the party carried out some policy without a vote of the masses or against the will of a vote of the masses. Other give a second, related, argument, that says the masses will need some sort of official institutional protection against the party, some sort of institutional system of checks and balances against the party becoming corrupt, since corrupt parties are what rule the USSR, etc., today, and that voting-type procedures are a way to keep a small group of people from using power in a corrupt way.

## **ARE DEMOCRACY AND VOTING REALLY 'DEMOCRATIC'?**

The issue really boils down to: "What if there is a contradiction between the second definition of democracy (decisions made to further communism -- to each according to need, etc.) and the third definition of democracy (some sort of shared power arrangement)?" Some people have said that in that case, the party should back down, give people the opportunity to learn, to make their own mistakes if necessary, even if it might harm themselves somewhat, because the "democratic procedure" is more important than the actual outcome or decision." This sounds very nice, but what if the supposed will of those people involved in that shared power-type situation will result in serious damage to some other sections of the working class? Is the party supposed to abide by some sort of decision that might result in the oppression of some other group of workers?

A fundamental problem with these "shared power/voting, etc." formulations is that they allow for very undemocratic, anti-communist or anti-working-class oppression against some segment of the working-class, and they provide a "democratic" cover to justify it. Specifically, if the students on a campus vote to allow the CIA to recruit on campus, would that be democratic? Of course not! The oppressed working classes of El Salvador, Iran, Africa, etc. didn't get to vote! Suppose the working class, under a dictatorship of the proletariat, decides to support the oppression of workers in another country, or to disagree with a party decision to put off raising the standard of living at home in order to help the working class in another country, based on selfish or nationalist ideas. Would it be "democratic" for the party to go along with that nationalist-selfish wish? Who gets to vote? Would we let



religious nuts vote -- people who may not have committed a crime like the KKK, but are clearly wrong, and thinking in a dangerous way? Would KKKers vote? If not, then who makes the decision? If the party decides who will vote, then it still boils down to the same thing.

**The heart of the question: Should the Party make the basic decisions, or should some other group make them?**

How will the masses understand the issues? Through the media? Who will run the media? Would these people really have the most power, and could they become a corrupt group if they have the power to describe and define the issues and/or the "candidates?" Who would you trust? Who *could* you trust?

The problem with "shared power/democratic procedures, etc." as the guarantee against small group power-corruption is that it is no guarantee against that sort of corruption. The main problem with anti-centralism is not that it is "inefficient, but democratic." The problem with it is that it is not particularly democratic. If the party does not assert power, and control power for the purpose of building a society based on "from each according to ability, to each according to need," communism, an end to oppression, war, and privilege, which will result in the most freedom (and the most "things") for virtually everyone, *then some other group will assert power for some other purpose, namely special privilege, capitalist oppression, etc.* All class society is a dictatorship. If communists, fighting for communism and all that that means, do not hold power in an ultimate sense, after all the steps are taken to ensure mass discussion, then some other group will seize power! They will certainly not play by those formalistic "fake-democratic" rules, or they will distort those rules. In any case, the class struggle will still rage, and there is no reason for the communists to refrain from fighting to win.

"Centralism" is not the opposite of "democracy" (used in the second sense of pro-communism, most freedom for the working class, etc.) One does not "balance" the other. On the contrary, *without centralism, there is no such thing as "democracy!"* "Would it be democratic to let one town hold up the water supply to another, if the voters agree to? Of course not! The working class of the world, not some small fraction, should be the decider; and yes, the party should make those decisions in

**The real contradiction in democratic centralism is between individualism and collectivism.**

the interests of the working class of the world. Otherwise, the other so-called democratic procedures simply allow some small group to assert their will over the need of all. There's nothing democratic about that!

The real contradiction in democratic centralism is not between democracy and centralism. It is between *individualism, or special-group loyalty, and collectivism, or what is good for the working class as a whole.*

The job of the communist party -- PLP -- is to grasp what is good for the working class as a whole and then to make certain that it is carried out. The party can only do that by winning millions of workers to communist ideas. If the party fails to do this, in the long run it will not understand what is in the interest of the world's working class. It will become a "special group" itself. But during the process of winning the world's workers to communism, the party's duty is to make sure no policies are put into effect which go against the interests of the working class no matter what kind of pseudo-democratic procedures were used to arrive at those policies.

This brings up the question "Well, who appointed the PLP to speak for the working class of the world? How do you know that you are right?" Well, we're certainly going to make some mistakes, but what's the alternative? To go around thinking that we're wrong? To run slowly towards the exit of a burning building because we are not quite sure that it is the right exit? To encourage what Lenin called "spontaneity," which means just letting people do "what comes naturally?" As Lenin pointed out, virtually nothing comes "naturally" except breathing; the idea of letting people "do what comes naturally" simply means letting all the other influences in their lives, developed by capitalism and capitalist culture, make up their minds. Some people who worry about "cramming communism down people's throats" don't realize that the bosses are cramming capitalism down people's throats. Our only hope is to win masses to fight voluntarily for communism. Doing that would be a prerequisite for revolution, anyhow. But should those who oppose it be allowed to exercise a dictatorship over those who are pro-communist? There's nothing wrong with those who understand the necessity for communism banding together, forming an organization to fight, with their lives, for communism. Certainly, there is a danger in claiming to speak for the working class of the world -- but that danger is not avoided by refusing to give strong leadership. In fact, the danger is compounded.

## **COMMUNIST CENTRALISM OR CAPITALIST CENTRALISM**

There are such things as anti-communist forms of centralism, of course. All forms of centralism that do not aim at carrying out a policy in the interest of the world's working class are really capitalist. But all of the authoritarian relations in capitalist society are centralist. In fact, only in the Party do we experience real democracy, though small groups of workers often act in democratic ways among themselves.

It is true that proclaiming ourselves "spokespeople or leaders of the world working-class movement" can be used to justify special privileges. That is why the first part of this essay emphasized that the mass, public commitment to communism is the best guarantee against this sort of corruption taking place. We must be on absolute guard against corruption in the party; we must win the party rank and file, and the working class in general, to be super-sensitive and vigorous in fighting this danger of corruption. Also, we must win the most dedicated and committed workers by the millions to be the members and leaders of the party. But weakening the party is not the way to do this.

Centralism is the expression of the most freedom for the most people, if you believe that communism is the hope of the future, and freedom is defined by the quality and quantity of social relations. Using that definition of democracy, centralism is the best, the only, expression of democracy. Opposing communist centralism will simply lead to capitalist centralism. The choice is not chaos or centralism -- it is communist centralism or capitalist centralism.

There is nothing "humanistic" about asserting individual freedom in contrast to communism, or to centralism. Marx correctly pointed out that we all will have the most freedom, and live the best lives, if we dare to interlock our lives with those of other people. People are not a burden; they are a source for finding better and better solutions to the world's problems. Functioning in a collective way, accepting the discipline of the party that is fighting for communism, fighting for and practicing centralism -- these are not denials of our freedom. Our humanity comes from our ability to shape and control our destinies, and this we can best do by functioning collectively. This is what communism brings, and this is what centralism -- which is thoroughly consistent with communism -- means.

If we are fighting in the interests of the working class of the world, then centralism -- communist centralism -- is the organizational expression of the best form of human relations, and is the best organizational form for the party and for society. If the party is not fighting in the interests of the working class of the world, then this question is

not important; then the important question is how to either straighten out the party or to smash it. Weak control is no protector against corruption.

So why should we lie and pretend that we are for some sort of shared power, when we, as everyone else, would resort to violence if we thought that enemies might come to power? Let's say it loud and clear: Centralism is not a "necessary evil;" it is the best expression of the most freedom for the working class of the world, and it is the best form of human relations -- making an agreement and sticking: to it.

## THE QUESTION OF THE ARMY

This ties into questions that have been raised about the idea of a standing army after the revolution. A professional army has been an important tool for revisionists to control and then to use against the working class. The only ultimate protection against this is the political understanding of the masses, including the masses of soldiers. Until capitalism is destroyed throughout the world, the working class, living under the dictatorship of the proletariat, must be armed (except, of course, for right-wingers and known enemies) and organized into local militias. We will also need a professional army, people who are trained fighters, who can handle sophisticated weaponry, and are prepared to go to the assistance of the militias or to the aid of workers elsewhere. The bosses and: their agents will attempt comebacks, and workers will still be fighting for revolution in other areas. With the Red Army, as with every other aspect of post-revolutionary life, the best check against corruption is ideological training and commitment. Additionally, we might consider not having the forts out on prairies and in the woods the way the U.S. bosses do, to try to isolate the soldiers from the rest of the working class. But to say that we should not have some people whose job it is to be well-trained professional soldiers in a world where capitalists will be trying to destroy our struggle for communism would be to set ourselves up for defeat.

How long will the dictatorship of the proletariat last before it finally "withers away?" I don't know. Perhaps more than 200 years and less than a million. No one knows, and no one can really even begin to imagine what life will be like after a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand years of communist economic relations. We need to avoid predictions where we have no basis for them; all we can say is that it will be a long period.

### ECONOMIC SYSTEM

### POLITICAL SYSTEM

**SOCIALISM** Wages system; wages given 'according to work'; inequality accepted although this will supposedly disappear with 'abundance' for all

**Dictatorship of proletariat led by party; still need laws, armies, jails, to prevent capitalists from rebuilding capitalism**

**COMMUNISM** Wage system abolished and replaced by communist distribution – 'From each according to ability, to each according to need' – egalitarianism

No more state; all human relations voluntary. All disagreements settled without having to use force because everyone wants to preserve communism as the best way of life.

## WHY WE FIGHT FOR COMMUNISM, NOT FOR SOCIALISM

During the discussion of *Road to Revolution IV* among the party and friends, many raised the question of whether

communism was the right name for the system we want to set up right after the revolution, because it's not quite the same as what Marx meant by the word. On the other hand, it is also not what was usually meant by socialism. In classical Marxist- Leninist writing, the terms "socialism" and "communism" usually had the meanings shown in **the chart above**.

*Road to Revolution IV* says that we want to build a society based on a combination of the two elements shown in heavier type above. Those who wanted to call it "socialism" to describe this point out that if we call it "communism" that would not be accurate because we would still have "a dictatorship of the proletariat; supposedly this definition would be contrary to what Marx and Lenin meant and would lead to confusion.

On the other hand, those who favored using the word "communism" pointed out that what we are talking about is qualitatively different from what has "been called "socialism." We are making a sharp, clear break with a basic aspect of Marxist-Leninist practice, and much of Marxist-Leninist writing, although, as we pointed out earlier, there is much in Lenin, and especially in Marx, that is consistent with what we are saying in *Road to Revolution IV*.

The reason for using a particular term is to have a certain effect on the world, and not because sound has any intrinsic meaning. We should use words in order to convey the clearest meaning. Use of the word "socialist" would not be as clear as "communist" in making it understood that we want to set up communist economic relations based on need. When you want to make a point very sharply, especially a break from an established way of thinking, it can certainly be useful to use different terms.

Actually, Engels wrote that when he and Marx were writing the Manifesto, they explicitly chose to use the word "communist" rather than call it the "Socialist Manifesto" because even though they were talking about replacing capitalism with socialism, the word "socialist" was being used by so many phonies and nuts that it was important to find some way to clearly differentiate their line from those of the others who were calling themselves "socialists." The Bolsheviks changed the name of their party from "social-democratic" to communist in 1918 for the same reason.

As far as mixing people up because of the other definition of "communism" as being the society after the need for violence, jails, laws, etc. is over, I believe that those who read will understand pretty clearly that we are not making the idealist-anarchist mistake of believing that such a society could be set up immediately, The role of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the Party in maintaining the system is unmistakable in our Manifesto.

Incidentally, there are many times when Marx, Engels, and Lenin used the term "communist" to describe a system that still had a dictatorship of the proletariat, although that was not their most common usage. One example is in *The State and Revolution*, one of the basic classics, that discusses the transformation of capitalism into dictatorship of the proletariat and the eventual "withering away of the state." Lenin has a whole section using the word "communism" interchangeably with a society that still has dictatorship of the proletariat. So, if Lenin was not so totally rigid in his use of the word "communism," I don't think it would be a mortal sin against dialectical materialism if we were to use the term communism as meaning a society with communist economic relations.

I favor the use of the word "communism." I think it is very important for us to convey the sharpness of our break with the old movement on the question of establishing communist economic relations immediately after seizing power. "Communism" may not be the most accurate term, but for our purposes it is far more accurate and clear than "socialism."

Of course, the most important questions now become "How do we live our lives now? What are the implications of *Road to Revolution IV*? And, How do we turn the potential of a new life for all workers into a reality?"

## Perseverance Pays

# Observations on Building a Base

*Road to Revolution (IV)* calls for a party of the masses, for winning over millions to our line. This presupposes that millions can be won. We believe that this is correct, and that despite setbacks due to worldwide revisionism, we can move forward now if the party devotes more of a priority to basebuilding, and if individual comrades change some ideas that have held us back in the past.

Our task in basebuilding is mainly to overcome the irrational fears of communist ideas and leadership that exist among many workers. The logic of our arguments is usually not the key problem, because we select people to win, who are generally in agreement with our line, or at least with our critique of capitalism.

But the bosses have beaten us to the punch with people, and filled them with a lot of ideas which divide them from us, such as: racism, anti-communism, individualism and illusions of individual escape from the contradictions of capitalism, nationalism, and cynicism.

How can we win our base away from these ideas? Lecturing usually isn't the method, nor is action alone. We win the trust of people; win them to our leadership as opposed to that of the bosses' ideologues. The relationship with a party member is absolutely crucial. This takes time. One of the things that hold back many comrades in winning a base is a short-term outlook coupled with shallow relationships with others.

Looking back over the people we have won, we see they have almost all been close friends over a long period: One was a friend of four years, active in the anti-Vietnam War movement. We struggled mightily with her to join at one point, but she decided to go off and try liberalism first, which took her out-of-state. We were redbaiting ourselves for our struggle and were embarrassed to call her. Finally we had a baby and felt inspired to call her. This resulted in a visit in which she read a whole bunch of *PL Magazines*. Her experiences with liberalism had made her hungry for our ideas. She was won to the party seven years after we met. The main lessons of this experience were: first, that close friends are valuable assets who should never be lost because we are most likely to win our friends, and second, that perseverance pays off and non-perseverance is foolish.

Perseverance flows from the recognition that objections to the party are subjective. We can remain friends, and continue the relationship around points of unity. We can continue to sell the paper to the person. Over time, the person will often see his/her own subjectivity in relation to events in life or in the world. One friend didn't want to be in the party for a couple of years because of nationalism and fear of persecution because he was black. The party continued to work with him. Finally he was with us one day when we were attacked by undercover police and the Revolutionary Union, a fake-left group. He was won over by the collective and decisive way we fought back. Another friend couldn't take the redbaiting of her friends. Over a period of a year or so she saw that while the party was fighting racism and the bosses, her redbaiting pals were sitting on their hands. She decided to join. Too often comrades become cynical about good people and give up. They don't think about the process of internal development that will lead to triumph for communist ideas over capitalist ones, even though the battle may be protracted.

One reason for a short-term approach is our own internal individualism. We want to feel good and successful about our work in the party. We want to look good, and we regard our base as recalcitrant would-be revolutionaries who are holding us back. We've got to be a little tougher. Objectively, winning people to the party in this historical period takes time. Later, as capitalism crumbles and fascism is imposed, it will take less time, as it took less for the Bolsheviks during WWI, or us during the Vietnam War.

Related to this is the big anti-communist fit everyone goes through before joining. A number of comrades seem to basebuild just fine up to this point and then back off. They can't take the heat. But objectively, every birth involves a struggle, every change an upheaval. We have to **increase** and **sharpen** the struggle at this point, not back off. Not doing so is simply protecting one's ego. Get hurt a little. We have a world to win at the cost of just a few personal scars.

One idea that really helped our work was that anyone can build a base with anyone (from the article on racism in *PL Magazine* (Vol. 12, No.3, Summer 1979)). This led to working with a lot of people of different backgrounds. If nothing else this experience demands more and makes us think about what's going on in other people's minds more. Usually it's about the same ideas, perhaps in different forms. For example, a working-class teenager may want to become a professional athlete, while a petit-bourgeois student may want an elite graduate program. Both are looking for an individual escape from capitalism. When working with people of different backgrounds, we don't need to transform ourselves into them or ape them, but only to be sensitive to their interests and their objections to the line.

Often we will need to seek creative ways of getting politics across, such as going to movies, or talking about the political aspect of everyday events.

Another thing that really helps is massive, consistent distribution of C-D. First, we see from the response that most people are at least open to our ideas. It is very encouraging. Second, it raises the line with our friends. People remark on the articles, or we can ask what they think. It puts the whole relationship on an explicitly political basis. Third, constant distribution to the same people builds the party. Life teaches people that the line of C-D is correct. C-D teaches them the significance of events. Several people we have sent the paper to for years have given money. Others have joined in time, or rejoined after a period of inactivity.

In addition to C-D, constant political discussions about everything are good. Whatever comes up is political, actually. Most people like to talk about the main current events in the world. This point seems trivial, but a lot of comrades seem to equate basebuilding with bourgeois friendship -- unity based on opportunism. Then they bring up politics to ask people to do something. It works better in the end to build a political relationship, and discuss disagreements around all sorts of issues over a long period. This article is not intended to down-grade the value of action, demonstrations, etc., but it seems that our main error is not taking the ideological development of our base seriously enough.

It really helps to build a base in groups. Those who do it win a lot more people, a lot more rapidly. We once had a group that was active together and also socialized on weekends. We had barbecues and picnics and went out to shows and clubs. We also met regularly to study. Several years later these people are all still in the party or active supporters. The interaction among the people was most useful in breaking down anti-communism and other subjective barriers. A regular study group led to a relatively good grounding in ideology, though we could have done a lot better in this respect.

Who we work with is important. There was a series of letters in last summer's C-D on lumpen. Some comrades think it's racist or anti-worker to reject lumpen or even to call people lumpen. Some comrades who fear or disdain working with others in their own social group tend to work with lumpen because they don't really think workers can be won to the party, or that they can win them. Lumpen, having practically no place to attach themselves, view the party as a haven and the members as saviors. We aren't a welfare group. The party needs the strongest, most levelheaded and stable members of the working class as its members and allies. Often such people are the most involved with other activities, but they are also the: ones who are capable of leading the working class to victory. In contrast, lumpen always try to take advantage of the party and never build a base. Further, they give us a bad image with workers, who are their victims in daily life.

One of the main obstacles to the approach advocated here is pragmatism -- substituting

**The Party needs the strongest, most stable, levelheaded workers as its members and allies.**

tons of activity for real substantive progress with the base. This sometimes results in bringing a lot of different people all the time, and kidding ourselves that we are contributing to the work of the party. It's true that attendance at events is an objective measure of our progress. But it can't be substituted for a qualitative evaluation of the progress of individual members of our base. Close friendship ties and consistent political struggle using C-D and other party literature, and winning them to being openly active with us in our campaigns, are the only ways to win people to the party. Pragmatism (opportunism) is an alternative that must be rejected. Related to this is the mistaken idea that doing things 'for' the party or pleasing the leadership will build the party.

In summary, to build, a mass base of millions for communism, we in the party will need to put more priority on basebuilding, and use a more protracted approach

## A Broader Outlook

# Build a Mass Base For the Party

In order to win a communist society it is necessary to win millions of workers into the party, and to have close ties to millions of others. This means that we have to start building a base for communist ideas and organization, among all types of workers. In the course of revolutionary battle millions of workers will be won to communism. When the revolution triumphs countless millions will have been won to launching a communist society with no concessions to capitalism.

How can a relatively small organization like ours is today win millions of workers and others to support a communist revolution? This article suggests a concept of basebuilding which, if put into practice by party members, would make this possible. It is not a new idea. The same ideas are set forth in the pamphlet, *Build a Base in the Working Class*, which was first adopted by our party in 1968! But we have a long way to go, as a party, in actually carrying out this line. Unless we make a major breakthrough in basebuilding, however, we will either never be able to bring about a revolution for communism to begin with, or, if we do, it will certainly be reversed, as were the Bolshevik and Chinese revolutions. This is the lesson of *Road to Revolution (IV)*.

Every PL member should have a personal and political base of many, many friends. We should think of our "base" as those persons we get together with, in whatever context, on a regular basis, at least every four to six weeks.

Many comrades carry out basebuilding in a very limited way. Outside other party members, and those who are in the party's immediate base, many comrades have few if any friends. Many comrades who do have many friends and acquaintances beyond the party and its immediate base do not think of these relationships as political. They have no long-range plan for moving these friends, who are less politically advanced or apolitical, to the left, toward the party's ideas. The results are similar in both cases -- political and personal isolation. This isolation is the major form revisionism takes within our party, and the major obstacle holding back our work. Obviously it is not a communist style of basebuilding, since with such a limited, narrow base we could never hope to build a base of millions of workers for communist ideas.

One cause of this limited basebuilding is a very narrow concept of what basebuilding is. Many comrades think of their "base" as being the politically advanced persons they know. Understood in this way, "basebuilding" means building friendships with politically advanced people. But even those who know a great many people will have only a relatively few politically advanced persons among them. So this mistaken and narrow concept of basebuilding often means in practice: "I will have only a very small number of friends" outside the party and those who are very close to it. This is deadly for the party and for communism.

Every PL member should have a personal and political base of many, many friends. We should think of our "base" as those persons we get together with, in whatever context, on a regular basis, at least every four to six weeks. The key idea here is regularity. Unless you see a person regularly, the personal and political relationship cannot develop over time. This article proposes that every member make it his/her basic political duty to have a base of 50 to 75 people, to see each of these people at least once every four to six weeks, and many of them much more often than that. As this process is taking place, each member should develop a plan for moving all these people to the left, over time, and to the extent possible. Working out this plan should be a main function of club meetings.

We should see this as a long-range process. We must make as many friends as possible, wage political struggle



with them on many levels, and maintain these friendships for years with those who are not won to joining PL. Naturally, most of any comrade's circle of friends will not be politically advanced. Most will not seem likely to join PLP in the near future, or perhaps ever. Many will even appear "apolitical." We should still maintain and build close ties with them over a long period of time, and develop and carry out a plan to move them to the left as much as possible. We must learn to have friends who are at all different levels of political interest.

There are at least two reasons for having such a broad base. In the short term, if everyone in the party had a base of fifty or more friends, there would be more recruiting going on. More persons from the party's base would become "advanced," become active, and join PLP. They, in turn, would be won to extending the party's base even further.

The second reason for having such a broad concept of basebuilding is more long-range. Repression, war, and fascism are in the future for U.S. workers. As fascist repression and war become reality, millions of people will become politicized who are not now politically active or interested. This is an historical law; war and fascism lead to mass politicization. But we can be sure that the ruling class will not permit us to freely agitate among these millions of politicized workers. Fascism will mean that we will not be able to contact and organize millions of politicized workers and others unless we already have a broad base of contacts among them. Only if we know masses of workers already will we be able to bring them around to our party and the ideas of communism.

Additionally, now as in the future, the party and its members will need help from many people in order to get the many things done that must be done if our struggles are to grow. Many of these things can be done if one has close friends, even if those friends are not especially political now. Babysitting, the loan of a car, money for bail or other purposes, and many other tasks needed to further the party's work can only be done if party members have many friends who can help us do them.

Some comrades have raised the question of how large the party needs to be before a communist revolution can take place. Obviously, whatever the size of the party, no matter how large it becomes, we must have a base many, many times that size. The only end to that process is when everyone is in the party!

## **WIN A MASS BASE**

Every PL member should, within a reasonable period of time, put him or herself into a situation where he or she sees 50 to 75 or more people on a regular basis. For most of us, this will mean that we should become active in one or several kinds of groups or organizations. If you work at a large place, or go to a university, there may be many such groups. But if not, you could look for groups in your area -- preferably beginning with groups that your own non-party friends already belong to. For example: a roadrunners' club (for joggers), or any kind of sports club, a tenants' organization, block association, or PTA if your kids are in school. Unions and many jobs have social committees. Churches are another possibility -- not the fundamentalist, crazy kind -- but some that are integrated, and attract socially active people, and have extensive social activities. These are not "good organizations;" rather they are organizations in which good people are involved.

Join an organization with a life of its own. We are not going out to "build" these groups as such, but to use them to get to know people. But you have to make the life of the organization a part of your life; and take it seriously, in order to be taken seriously by those in it. The idea is not to join a group, identify the most left forces within it, then concentrate on them to the exclusion of the rest of the people; not to build the group as a reformist group; not to become a leader of the organization, but to have a serious, long-term relationship with the people in it, using the group as a vehicle to do this. As soon as possible, you should see your new friends outside of the group's activities as well. You should be involved with them in many ways.

Naturally there are tactical differences in working in different kinds of groups. Open communists cannot operate inside a few kinds of groups: many churches, Boy Scouts, a few others. Non-public people, on the other hand, can be active in all of these. Also, some groups are more directly tied to the ruling class than others. Neighborhood, sports and social clubs, etc. are less likely to be led by people ideologically committed to capitalism. But often the best groups for meeting people will be ruling class-led mass organizations. The main thing is to make a plan, and get involved.

## **MOVE THE MASS BASE TO THE LEFT**

Some people might object that we might fall into an opportunist trap, and for the sake of not endangering new friendships, stop raising our political ideas. This is a danger. But, although we always have to fight opportunism, the biggest danger at this point is sectarianism, being "politically pure in glorious isolation." While aiming to win people to the party as fast as possible, we should see basebuilding as a long-range thing. While combating right-wing opportunism (revisionism) we should see sectarian isolation as the main form of opportunism.

Once we start making more friends on & regular basis, we will be able to bring more people to InCAR and PLP activities, increase the sale of C-D and the InCAR *Arrow-La Flecha*, etc. And we can and must have political discussions with even the least political of our base. Individual articles from C-D or the Arrow can be given to people for their reaction. And, after all, we live in a period now where world events happen so fast that people are beginning to look for answers, or at least explanations of why things are happening. When the army crushed the Solidarity union in Poland, how many of us got comments from people we thought weren't interested in current events? True, many people were and are taken in by the redbaiting pushed by the bosses' press, but this gives us a great opportunity to explain many aspects of our line -- the main contradiction in the world and why it leads to WWII, why the Soviet Union isn't communist, why religion and nationalism are bad, the hypocrisy of Reagan and the union hacks supporting Walesa while screwing workers here, etc.

We should raise with people the less "obvious" aspects of our line: how politics, the class struggle, the decline of the U .S. rulers and the move towards war and fascism color every aspect of their lives and ours, even though they might not be aware of it.

## **WE NEED A LONG-RANGE OUTLOOK**

We must have a long-range attitude about changing people. We should ditch the idea that, if people don't respond quickly to our ideas, we are "wasting our time on them."

We should also maintain contacts with people who, for one reason or another, have left the Party on a friendly basis. Over the years many people have left the Party, and we have lost touch with them. Many other comrades who left the Party are still friendly to it, and come to May Day, buy a sub, contribute money -- or could be won to any or all of these. We should see that as part of our basebuilding.

With every Party member, a plan should be made in the club on how to get a mass base and then on how to move each of them to the left while developing our relationship with them.

One excuse given by many of us for not doing all of this is that we are "too busy," that we "don't have the time." But what is it we are so busy doing? Often the wrong things -- watching TV by ourselves, going to too many

meetings among ourselves without bringing anyone. We should be busy building a base for our Party, involving ourselves, our spouses, children, friends and comrades in that process, and selling our paper and discussing how to crush this rotten system.

The essential point of *Road to Revolution (IV)*, summed up at the beginning of this article, is that communist ideas must be grasped by millions. None of the ideas in RR IV are possible without a turn-around in our basebuilding. In fact, if we don't do this, *RRIV* could turn into its opposite -- rather than building new commitment and a brighter vision of the future, it could be a source for cynicism and revisionist ideas if the Party does not make some progress in building the mass base which is the essence of *RRIV*. If we do begin the struggle to qualitatively change our basebuilding, our confidence in the Party's future, and in communism, will grow qualitatively, too. Build a mass base for communism!

## Revolutionary Workers Will Need

# A Red Army For Red Power

No socialist revolution has ever taken place without a Red Army. The fight for communism cannot succeed without a Red Army, led by a communist party. During the unfolding of communist revolution, millions of workers and others will be won to the necessity of banding together in a cohesive form so that by force of arms they can finally defeat the capitalist class. Obviously, groupings of workers who are not united either politically or organizationally cannot succeed in defeating an enemy who is coordinated politically and organizationally.

As the revolutionary process goes forward, all workers loyal to the communist revolution will arm themselves. Tens of millions of armed workers will become the backbone of the Red Army. They will be the source of manpower for the Party's army, an army that grows out of the working class. After the triumph of the communist revolution, should the Red Army be disbanded? Should political power -- communist power -- won by the workers be maintained exclusively by bodies of armed workers? This question raises many other questions. Why would you disband the very instrument that was crucial to the seizure of political power? If the communist revolution triumphed in one country, wouldn't the bosses of other countries try to smash this revolution? Shouldn't workers of one area who have triumphed politically go to the aid of workers in other areas who are still fighting for communism? Or should we mechanically apply Lenin's thesis of not exporting revolution from one revolutionary area to another? If all workers are armed, and are formed into workers' militias after the revolution, is this sufficient for the maintenance of political power in one area? Are militias adequate for energetically supporting the revolutionary process in other areas?

Militias of armed workers are very good. Surely they are vital to securing and consolidating workers' power after the victory of the dictatorship of the proletariat. But, sticking solely to this form limits communists to defensive warfare. Workers need the ability to move swiftly and decisively with armed might, to be able to go on the offensive against attack from the bosses. Similarly, workers need to be prepared to go anywhere on the face of the earth to aid the forces of revolution. To be on the offensive requires preparation, planning, coordination, supplies, forces, weapons, etc. These are the characteristics of an army; in this case a Red Army.

But it is often said that an army is a reactionary thing, or that an army is bound to be used by the party to suppress workers. Well, then, it is not an army that we are worried about, but the party, any party. While it is valid to be worried about the political purity of the party, the answer to that question can't be not to have the party at all! This type of anarchism plays right into the hands of the bosses. As long as they can maintain workers' cynicism about workers' ability to control their destinies, the bosses are safe. Consequently, the bosses would be in clover if workers could not field significant military forces. Workers, who are denied the ability to go on the offensive, or to move swiftly from front to front to buttress besieged militias, would be duck soup for their class enemies. Workers who voluntarily consign themselves to defensive tactics are workers who can't win, or who are afraid of victory. During the period of the Paris Commune, workers sat behind fixed barricades as the French bosses, backed by German troops, and marched on Paris. The workers had no organized army to march out and attack the enemy before they reached Paris; the defensive barricades were breached and the workers were slaughtered. Seventy years later, French troops, led by French capitalists, sat behind the famous Maginot line, which was supposed to be impregnable, and, to withstand any Nazi attack. The Nazis went around it instead, and in days it was captured.

During World War II, the Soviet Union developed the necessary strategy and skills to crush the invading Germans. They used a combination of "scorched earth" tactics, guerrilla warfare behind Nazi lines, and strategic retreats that

protected reserves and sapped the enemy's strength. These tactics enabled the Red Army to go on the offensive. Finally the Germans were defeated by offensive warfare combining all of these tactics. The Nazis were not defeated by millions of workers sitting behind barricades without clear leadership or strategies. When previous revolutions went bad, it was not because the army was in some mystical way reactionary. It was because the policies of the communist party were inadequate to hold power. Politics, not organization, was the primary cause. This political question, the question of line, is crucial -- without the correct line and leadership from the party, an armed working class could be as reactionary as any army! If the workers of Poland were all armed to the teeth under the leadership of Solidarity, would that have meant communism? No! It would have only meant the replacement of the pro-Moscow fascist government by a pro-Washington fascist government. Suppose the KKK succeeded in arming millions of workers in this country organized around their line - would that result in communist revolution?

A Red Army that is incorporated into the party structure, and led by the party (not all that different from what we are trying to do in our military work, which we describe as steps toward a Red Army) must be drawn from the armed working class -- which is loyal to the revolution. Its ranks must constantly be replenished from the working class. Many lessons from other Red Armies could be drawn on. For example, the Chinese People's Liberation Army often harvested and did other work when needed. It had strict codes for keeping positive relations with the workers and peasants. During the Korean War, PLA volunteers went into North Korea to aid the working class there and to prevent a U.S. invasion of Manchuria. It is hard to imagine that that could have been done without a Red Army. Further, the Red Army, combined with millions of armed workers organized in militias, succeeded in keeping the U.S., and later the Soviets, at bay. While no experiences are perfect, many things can be learned from all of them.

Of course, our Red Army would operate with no rank, privileges or wages. It would function like other sections of the party and mass organizations under the Party's leadership. Both the Soviet Red Army and the PLA used the tactic of winning over the enemy soldiers politically. This was done by agitation, often before battle, fraternization, penetration and winning over prisoners. We should emphasize this tactic.

After we take power, attempts to reverse the dictatorship of the proletariat from within and without will continue and increase. A Red Army will be crucial for the working class to hold power. Armed might, coupled with the politicization of millions of workers under the leadership of the party, will be necessary if the working class is to prevail.

# ON DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM

(article first published in 1982)

We communists are bitterly opposed to the democracy practiced in capitalist countries, that is, to "bourgeois democracy" based on periodic elections with secret ballots for presidents and parliaments or congresses. Bourgeois democracy is an elitist system that guarantees the capitalists run things while workers have no real say in how society works.

What kind of society do you want? We want a society where working people run everything for the interests of the workers. We want a system where every worker is actively pushed to become involved in running society, where everyone is trained to act for the common good, where putting individual self-interest above the social good is punished. We want a system that helps each worker grow, that corrects mistakes, that encourages honest evaluation and self-evaluation of each person. We want a system that stamps out rotten ideas and punishes anti-social behavior.

To get this kind of society, we need collective organization. That is why we need a Party--to encourage everyone to speak out and act, to draw on our collective strength, to help each other correct our mistakes. Too often we look at the party as restricting us and limiting us ("the Party makes me go to meetings," "the Party makes me talk about revolution at work.") Actually, the Party liberates us and gives us the strength to put our ideas into action. Isolated individuals will never change society; we need organization! This will continue to be true after the revolution just as it is before.

The Party is organized on the basis of **democratic centralism**. The Party is divided into cells, or clubs, which meet regularly to evaluate members' work and to make suggestions about how to improve it, and to evaluate the Party's positions and make suggestions for change. These suggestions are taken by the club leader to section meetings (made up of the club leaders and other leading comrades in an area, and by section leaders to the Central Committee. Based on the collective experience of the Party, the leadership decides on new positions (a new line) which all Party members are then bound to put into practice. Only if all of us put the same line into practice can we find out if the line works; if each of us goes our own way, we will never have the common strength of a united Party.

Democratic centralism is communist democracy. After the revolution we will run all of society along democratic centralist lines. Let us contrast communist democracy with bourgeois democracy, to show how communist democracy serves the interests of the working class, the great majority of people, while bourgeois democracy serves the interests of the bourgeoisie, the small rich elite.

Democratic centralism forces everyone to speak up. At club meetings, each person must express their opinions, including openly voicing their disagreements. Bourgeois democracy listens only to the silver-tongued stars, the media-fashioned "opinion makers." Most people are encouraged to be passive, to go along with the drift. Nothing encourages you to speak out if you are shy. This builds the elitist attitude that politics is only for the chosen few, that most of us are too dumb to know what is going on. This is inherent in a system based on large-scale elections, without small decision-making groups that meet regularly.

Democratic centralism forces people to evaluate themselves honestly and to listen to the evaluation of others (praise as well as criticism). This lets people grow and improve, and it holds back the liars and braggarts. Bourgeois

democracy, on the other hand, encourages the con artist who can hide his failures and his cheating. The system penalizes honesty and thoughtfulness in favor of the best actor. Under bourgeois democracy, politicians are rarely held responsible for their mistakes. This is great for the elite who want to hide how they swindle and exploit us.

Besides drawing on the strength of the collective, democratic centralism also forces us to act in a collective manner--to do what is best for the group. He who pursues individual self-interest at the expense of the common purpose will catch hell at the next club meeting, because he makes things harder for his comrades. This way we learn to help each other. Bourgeois democracy is based on the principle of screwing the other guy so you can get ahead. Telling lies about your opponent is okay as long as you don't get caught. What counts is winning the election, not improving society.

Each Party member accepts the discipline of carrying out the Party line. So once a decision has been reached, we can be sure that there will be a struggle everywhere to put that decision into action. Under bourgeois democracy, there is no discipline except the courts and the jails. There is no system to win people to the common decision. There is nothing to guarantee that the rich and powerful will follow the decision of the legislature, if they can figure out how to avoid it; no one is going to call them to account in front of a mass meeting. Each person may try to undermine the group decision for his own advantage.

Finally, democratic centralism is based on struggling to weed out rotten ideas and anti-social behavior. We want to help each other become better people. Bourgeois democracy is based on "doing your own thing," which is the essence of civil liberties. Each person is said to be "free" to do whatever they want--that is, to screw everyone else, if they can get away with it." Free speech" protects vile racist crap that advocates mass murder. Communists want nothing to do with such "free speech"--we think that seriously dangerous anti-social ideas should be rooted out, not given free play. Bourgeois democracy protects creeps, while only democratic centralism encourages full and open discussion and criticism.

In short, bourgeois democracy helps a small elite that wants to hide its lies; bourgeois democracy encourages dog-eat-dog individualism; it forces most people to be passive while superstars take over politics. The problem with secret ballots, legislatures and civil liberties is not that the rich capitalists cheat on the rules for their own benefit. The problem is that the rules of bourgeois democracy guarantee that the great majority of people, the workers, are frozen out. If we were to institute bourgeois democracy after the revolution, that would only encourage the formation of a new capitalist class.

## **DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM AND COMMUNIST DEMOCRACY**

We can see the need for democratic centralism if we study the experience of past communist movements. For instance, in the Russian Revolution, many leaders thought that bourgeois democracy was the best system, but bitter experience taught them that only through democratic centralism could the revolution advance. When Lenin first proposed the idea of democratic centralism in *What Is To Be Done?* he was apologetic about the new concept, saying it was unfortunately necessary because of the repression in Czarist Russia. The idea that democratic centralism is an evil forced upon us by capitalist repression is still widespread. This is very wrong. Democratic centralism is communist democracy; it is what we want to replace bourgeois democracy with.

After the revolution in 1917, many Bolsheviks still had illusions about some aspects of bourgeois democracy. For instance, there was considerable unhappiness with the Party's decision to outlaw other parties and later, to ban

factions inside the Party. Some people reasoned that if one Party is good, more parties must be better. Lots of parties would allow "freedom of choice." This is a rotten idea which avoids the basic question, "what is the political line guiding the different parties?" The reason the Bolsheviks outlawed the other parties was that all the other parties were being used as tools by the capitalists in their drive to reconquer power. The battle between workers and capitalists will heat up after the revolution, and the capitalists will use every opportunity to organize. The working class needs to be united against the class enemy.

Some people think that having one party stifles discussion and disagreement. Quite the contrary: Having many parties often leads to sham competition based on personalities, as in the U.S., with the Democrats and Republicans. A democratic-centralist party organizes full discussion: each party member is required to express his frank opinion on all party policies, and all workers outside the party are urged to do the same.

Some people worry that the Party may go revisionist. That is a real danger, because revisionism--capitalist ideas clothed in a communist cover--is the form bourgeois ideas take within the workers' movement. But having many parties is only an excuse for revisionists to organize under the cover of another party. If the one party were to be taken over by revisionists, then communists would split the party, found a new party dedicated to the violent overthrow and suppression of the revisionist party.

The Bolsheviks also gave some support to workers' councils (soviets) in 1917-18. These soviets were usually organized on bourgeois democratic lines, and they had the usual faults of bourgeois democratic institutions. The superstar speakers and the best educated and richest (meaning the skilled workers) dominated. Individualism was the order of the day: many factory soviets refused to cooperate for the common good in the spring of 1918, hoarding goods that were vital for the defense of the revolution and for provisioning workers elsewhere. In practice, the soviets were pretty much under the influence of syndicalism," which calls for the workers in each factory to run their plant without any overall organization of society as a whole. Syndicalism is basically capitalism based on workers' cooperatives. We communists want to see a collective solution, with workers as a class running society as a whole, not competing with each other.

## THE MASS LINE IN CHINA

The Chinese revolution also had a mixed experience with respect to communist democracy. The Chinese Communist Party made a lot of rotten concessions to the capitalists, including letting them keep some small bourgeois parties. The good thing that the Chinese Communist Party did was to develop the concept of a mass line. The Chinese Revolution advanced to the left whenever this concept was put into practice, as during the Yanan period, the Great Leap Forward, and the early part of the Cultural Revolution. The mass line was summed up in a slogan, "from the masses, to the masses"--which is a good description of how communist leadership works. The communists learn from the experiences of the non-Party workers; the Party distills the best aspects of the workers' views and forms a new line; the communists then go out to win the non-Party workers to support this new, more left line.

Unfortunately the Chinese Communist Party often strayed from this principle and made the Party into something of a privileged elite. The Party must be open to everyone who accepts its principles and its discipline. If entry is restricted, the opportunists will double and redouble their efforts to get in, figuring that membership is a sure ticket to success in a career; ordinary workers will be discouraged. The Party's goal must be to **recruit every worker** into the Party, to involve every worker in the democratic centralist process. The correct way to resolve the problem of the Party's relation to non-Party workers is to recruit all workers to the Party.



Finally, we should be clear that **there is no one thing called "democracy."** There are different kinds of democracy, and each kind serves a different class. For instance, there was the "democracy" of ancient Greece, especially Athens. This "democracy" is often paraded as an example of true freedom. What crap! The only people who were allowed to vote in ancient Greece were the "freemen," which excluded the great majority of the people, who were either slaves or voteless women and foreigners. Greek democracy was slave owner democracy.

Bourgeois democracy arose as part of the struggle against feudalism. Feudalism was based on the rule of kings and lords, whose power the new capitalists wanted to overthrow. When the new bourgeoisie said "all men are created equal," they meant that they should be equal with the kings and lords and that privileges should be based on wealth, not on inherited title. Jefferson saw no contradiction between writing the Declaration of Independence and owning slaves; the Declaration only applies to the bourgeoisie. That is why only those who owned property were allowed to vote. Later, as the working class got stronger, the capitalists discovered that bourgeois democracy could be used as a powerful myth to pull the wool over the eyes of workers.

Unfortunately, many workers partially accept this myth and think that the U.S. is a "free" country, where everyone has an equal chance to get ahead, the people choose the government, have freedom of speech, etc. We must step up our work to show that bourgeois democracy is democracy for the capitalist rich, who have a dictatorship over the rest of us, the working class. Our goal is to replace this dictatorship of the bourgeoisie with a dictatorship of the proletariat. The dictatorship of the proletariat will be based on communist democracy among the workers and ruthless dictatorship by the workers over the capitalist.

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1982

# FIGHTING RACISM: A KEY STRUGGLE

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The fight against racism is one of the major aspects of the fight for an egalitarian society, and should be seen as central to the struggle for communism. Racism is not an "accidental" or "incidental" aspect of capitalism, but an essential one. Nowhere has there been, or will there be, a capitalist society which is non-racist. Capitalist relations of production created historically and maintained everywhere to the present day, the material basis of racism. At the same time, racism, closely linked with anti-communism, is a major aspect of bourgeois ideology.

This article raises and develops four general points:

- (1) The fight against racism under capitalism is not "just another reform."
- (2) Capitalism cannot and will not ever eliminate racism, so all non-communist anti-racist movements are doomed to failure.
- (3) To the extent that capitalist production relations are allowed to exist under the dictatorship of the proletariat, racism will continue to exist even if efforts are made to fight it on an ideological and on an economic level.
- (4) To the extent that racism continues to form a part of people's consciousness, it will be difficult or impossible to build a communist society.

## RACISM--A CENTRAL ASPECT OF CAPITALISM

Pre-capitalist societies had many ways of dividing the oppressed classes and creating group hostilities, but the notion of "race" was probably not one of them. The idea of "natural" differences among human groups--in the sense of biological differences--was closely linked to the rise of modern science. In particular, the development of taxonomy (classification of living things) was a product of the rapid overseas expansion of European mercantile capitalism in the 16th and 17th centuries, and a prerequisite for the "scientific" classification of human "types".

At the same time, the rise of capitalism in Europe depended on the forcible incorporation of Africans, Asians, Native Americans and other "people of color" into the sphere of capitalist production relations. The so-called "primitive accumulation of capital" which fueled the development of industry in Europe was nothing but the expropriation of wealth and labor power from non-European societies. At first, the European bourgeoisie justified this rip-off on the basis of religion: the Pope divided the world and told the rulers of Spain and Portugal who could

do their ripping-off where. But this was not enough--it was necessary to explain why these people were to be ripped off rather than converted, and besides, after the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century, the leading national bourgeoisie of England, Sweden, and Holland didn't care what the Pope said anyway. So the idea of distinct "racial" groups, some of which were supposedly inferior to others, came to play the key legitimizing role. This aspect of racism has remained important to the present day, because the logic of capitalism has continued to require overseas expansion and increasingly complete incorporation of all people of the world into the capitalist sphere.

The particular pattern of racism in North America-- in many respects the pattern for all subsequent development--emerged mainly in relation to the emergence of a multi-racial work force in the British colonies. Black and white laborers were forced by law into qualitatively different relations of production: slaves were not simply "zero-wage" earners, but were not allowed even the "privilege" of selling their own labor power on the market as an increasing proportion of white laborers were forced to do. Meanwhile, Native Americans, who were not strong enough to maintain their own system of production in the face of the European invasion, but strong enough to resist enslavement, were subjected to genocide. Anti-black racism thus became the main form of racism in the United States.

With the destruction of slave-capitalism, and the rapid industrialization of the United States in the late nineteenth century, the working class became multiracial and the system of racist capitalism took on its present shape. The concept of race was written into law, and strict segregation of the so-called "races" was enforced with the power of the state at the point of production and in every other sphere of life. "Separate" was never "equal", anytime or anywhere. Differential in wages paid, in employment patterns and job classifications, in "social wages" such as education and health care, and so forth--the super-exploitation of supposedly "inferior races"--provided additional billions of dollars ripped off from the working class by capitalist bosses.

At the same time, the actual differences in the lives of persons of different "races"--created by the bosses themselves--were explained by the bosses' ideologues as supposedly the result of so-called "natural biological hereditary differences" among these so-called "races." Thus, social inequality was defended as an inevitable "fact of nature." Workers were kept divided, at each others' throats, and in some cases were used as the shock-troops to keep down the superexploited minorities. The worker-farmer Populist movement was destroyed by this racism, and the U.S. Labor movement seriously set back. In addition, this ideology of racism played the key role in preventing the development of communist consciousness on a mass scale. To the extent that the super-exploitation of minority workers seemed "natural" (as in the "social-darwinist" mythology) any possibility of a society based on full social equality must have seemed remote indeed. Racism necessarily leads to anti-communism!

Because racism is an integral part of capitalism, serious anti-racists should become communists. Only by destroying the system on which it rests can racism be eliminated.

## **THE FIGHT AGAINST RACISM UNDER CAPITALISM**

Under capitalism, so-called "liberal" anti-racism will inevitably be turned into its opposite. Liberalism means relying on the bourgeois state--cops, legislation and especially the courts--to stop the KKK and other racist-fascist groups. This is a real loser! Liberalism pushes pacifism as well as legalism, disarming the anti-racist struggle. Liberalism rejects the view that racism stems from capitalism, blaming it instead on individual prejudice, and singling out the white worker as the villain. Since white workers, too, are hurt by racism, this is a version of "blaming the victim." Thus liberalism is also idealist: not recognizing the connection between racist ideas and racist segregation/discrimination, it calls for toleration of racist ideas under the slogan of "free speech." Liberalism

promotes nationalism--"to each his own." Liberalism and the bourgeois notion of "right" lead to a narrow, economist view of the fight against racist wage differential and so forth, calling for the elimination of overt differential ("equal pay for equal work"), or at best, equal access to different job categories. It cannot deal with the historical fact of segregation and the racist lies pushed to defend it: witness the stampede of liberal ideologues who jumped on the "reverse discrimination" racist bandwagon. Liberalism calls for "toleration" of other "races" in spite of their "differences." It hides the fact that workers of all so-called "races" have far more in common than they have differences, and the fact that the whole concept of "race" is an invention of the bosses.

Only communist ideas and organization can give the leadership which will ensure that anti-racist organizers avoid these pitfalls. And communists must point out that the logic of real anti-racism leads inevitably to an openness to communist ideas.

Because racism is an integral part of capitalism, communists must be anti-racist organizers. To take and hold power on a communist program will require masses of workers won to the idea of a society organized in the interests of the working class *as a class* and on the basis of full social (not merely legal) equality. Winning people to these ideas involves convincing them *at least* of the truth and importance of our analysis of racism. In fact, this may prove to be the largest part of this ideological struggle. Thus, waging serious anti-racist struggle on all fronts under capitalism is a prerequisite for the building of communism under the dictatorship of the working class, and is a key political task.

## **THE PARTY AND InCAR**

The International Committee Against Racism is not a "liberal" or "reform" organization. If it were, we would be trying to win people out of it and smash it! InCAR is a radical organization led by the Party, which the Party builds in order to advance the struggle for communism. This does not mean that everyone in InCAR or even in InCAR leadership must be in the Party.

Because of the power of communist ideas and organization in developing anti-racist analysis and strategy, InCAR--the party-led mass anti-racist organization-- has been noticeably successful in a number of respects. Many should be willing to join, based on those successes, but without necessarily understanding what's behind it. And they may be willing to build InCAR among their bases, but around politics different from ours. That's fine, but we are not about to let liberal politics lead InCAR. The Party leads InCAR. If we try to downplay this it would mean not fighting anti-communism, and if we don't fight it, we'll be defeated by it. On the other hand, this doesn't mean that the InCAR organization is or should be identical with the Party organization, but Party members should be held responsible for winning their base to be active in InCAR.

## **THE FIGHT AGAINST RACISM AFTER THE REVOLUTION**

The main thrust of the anti-racist struggle in the creation of communist society will have to be the destruction of the material basis of racism. This is why the detailed analysis of racism and capitalism becomes important: abolition of wage inequality would not go very far at all toward the destruction of racism. It would be consistent with the maintenance of segregation and hence unequal access to food, education, housing and so forth, as well as continuing to generate racist consciousness. Furthermore, it would ignore the real and material differences between so-called races which originated under capitalism and have lasting effects. For example, black and other minority

people will continue to be, on the whole, more frequently victimized by illness and will probably therefore need more health care. Distribution based on need would take all this into account, especially the need to fight segregation.

In every particular case, whether it be the desegregation of a neighborhood, the elimination of IQ testing and tracking in the schools, the abolition of racist job categories, the smashing of a racist organization, or anything else, masses of people (black, white, and everyone else) will have to be convinced that racism exists in that particular case and that it is in their interest to join the fight against it. This is the same thing we run into now, when we organize around a particular issue of racism: there are always plenty of people who will tell you that of course they are against racism, but why is this an example of racism? This is especially the case because we will be giving preferential treatment, in many cases to overcome the effects of past racism. This might include more responsibility on the job, first crack at training programs and at better housing, etc. To do anything else would in itself be racist, and would undermine the principle of, "to each according to need." But you can bet that there will be plenty of resistance, even from well-meaning and winnable people, on the grounds of "reverse discrimination" or the like.

Beyond this, we will work to develop an anti-racist, international communist culture and curriculum and struggle to replace capitalist "art" and "thought" with these new ideas. Both inside and outside the Party there will be struggle over this new culture, and how to carry out a true anti-racist line. Multi-racial social relations will have to be built up, carefully and with a plan for each individual in and around the Party, much as we should be analyzing our basebuilding now. Integration in a true sense will not simply flow from the desegregation of social institutions.

In short, the fight against racism during the dictatorship of the proletariat will not be an overnight thing, but a dialectical process of transforming the base and superstructure of society. Of course, we will wipe out obviously racist laws and institutions immediately, but the Party will need to continue to fight ideologically to win masses of people to become a material force to destroy the basis of racism, even while remnants of capitalism continue to generate racist consciousness. Thus, the destruction of racism will take as long as the destruction of all capitalist aspects of social organization.

InCAR will have a very important role to play in this process, growing directly out of the role it should be playing today. It will be the mass organization led by the Party to carry out this vital aspect of the work, with the unity of Party members and non-Party people who are willing to work on these tasks under the Party's leadership. The role of InCAR will not be to "keep the Party in check" or to "prevent corruption in the Party."

In a great many particular situations, the main resistance to equalization of the social relations of production will take the form of racism: "blacks are getting everything," "standards are being lowered," "you can't get people to work together like that," and so forth. If separate has never been equal, then separate never will be equal. A "racist communist society" would be contradiction in terms. We are trying to win people to follow the leadership of a multi-racial party, and to join it; how can we do that without making great strides in the fight against racism? And a so-called "communist" party which soft-pedaled the fight against racism would have no right to expect to win the loyalty of black and other minority workers, nor of honest white workers. A party willing to tolerate racist inequality would tolerate all sorts of inequality and privilege.

We can wage a successful struggle against racism, and we can win mass support on the basis of a consistently communist program. The two are very deeply linked, particularly when we consider nationalism and patriotism as closely tied with racism. **The fight against racism is a central part of the fight for communism, now and in the future.**

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# COMMUNIST PARTIES ARE THE CUSTODIANS OF THE FUTURE

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The lively debate that will surely take place in the wake of *Road to Revolution IV* should help propel the party forward. Ideological struggle that leads to sharper class struggle and sharper struggle for the allegiance of the working class is the lifeblood of a communist party. The questions raised by *Road to Revolution IV* hold vital interest for billions of people, both subjectively and objectively. Many workers and others already think seriously about the sort of society they want to live in and look in various ways for an alternative to the present system. Furthermore, history has shown that communist parties are indeed custodians of the future because the future depends primarily upon the line that communists win workers to carry out.

The party must strive for ideological clarity about the nature of all its goals, short-range, intermediate, and ultimate. The old communist movement defined its goals in a straightforward manner: first the seizure of power, then the dictatorship of the proletariat, then the protracted historical period known as socialism, and finally the withering away of the state and peaceful transition to communism and a classless society.

But the old communist movement is dead. The PLP would not exist otherwise. Our party came into being in the struggle against revisionism, grew in the course of this struggle, and fights today to launch a new international communist movement in the period of bosses' war, fascism, U.S. imperialist collapse, and the new "highest stage" of world capitalism, revisionist imperialism.

Over a decade ago, *Road to Revolution III* broke radically with certain traditional goals and concepts of the old movement while at the same time retaining others. *Road to Revolution IV* takes another step in this direction. There will be others. Reality always moves faster than theory. The earth had been round for billions of years before its roundness was discovered. It revolved around the sun all the time people believed the sun revolved around it. The old communist movement had turned into its opposite long before its death became obvious. Each of our party's major theoretical statements over the past decade and a half--*Road to Revolution I*, *Road to Revolution II*, *Build a Base in the Working Class*, *Road to Revolution III*, *Reform and Revolution*, and now *Road to Revolution IV -- A Communist Manifesto (1982)*, has been an attempt to grapple with the historical experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat, to analyze the causes of the reversion to capitalism by the formerly socialist states, and to learn a little better how to win.

In the year between the first discussion concerning *Road to Revolution IV* and its present publication in final form, quite a few articles appeared expressing disagreements with one or another aspect of its line. This article will attempt to analyze and answer some points made in these disagreements.

The central thesis of *Road to Revolution IV* asserts that egalitarian society must be the immediate goal of the proletarian dictatorship, that the wage system must be abolished right away, that the majority of workers and their

allies can and must be won to these aims during the course of the fight for power and afterwards, and that nothing less will bring victory. In and of itself, this reaffirmation of egalitarianism does not constitute the new element of *Road to Revolution IV*. Every leading communist from Marx on endorsed this concept. However, *Road to Revolution IV* does break with the traditional timetable, which states that under the dictatorship of the proletariat, an indefinite period of social stratification must precede communism because not enough people can be won immediately to the abolition of wages and to egalitarianism. *Road to Revolution IV* breaks even more sharply than *Road to Revolution III* with this standard estimate about the protracted unwinnability of the masses to communist ideas.

Those who disagreed with *Road to Revolution IV* offered a series of reasons for maintaining the revolution-socialism-communism timetable as laid out in Marx' *Critique of the Gotha Program* and other classic writings. One argument states that since an egalitarian society has never yet been built after the seizure of power, we cannot do so: "Neither the party, nor the masses, nor the international working class in its history," it says, "has ever had any significant mass experiences with a mode of production for all of society that is free of all material incentives."

Stated in other words, this argument boils down to the thesis that because a thing has not happened before, it therefore can never happen. It is really a corollary to the proposition that the more things change the more they remain the same. Viewed from either angle, as a general scientific abstraction, this point is an absurdity. If you argue that what hasn't happened can't happen, you are really making a case for the line that Galileo really didn't see the moons of Jupiter, that human beings can't fly, or that a worker who hasn't yet become a communist leader will never be able to do so. This is certainly not the intention of *Road to Revolution IV's* critics, but arguments have logic independent of their makers' motives.

The real issue is not that the communist movement has yet to attempt building an egalitarian society immediately after the seizure of power: this point is moot. The history of the dictatorship of the proletariat shows that in the past, the communist leadership always found reasons for not abolishing the wage system and moving straight to egalitarianism; asserting that we can't do it because they didn't do it is redundant at best.

The real issue is whether or not such an approach is feasible. The argument that it is not depends heavily on the estimate that the masses are too backward, too deluded by capitalist individualism to accept such an advanced concept. In one of his more profound comments, Marx mentioned that humanity produces only problems that have solutions, because a problem could not exist if the elements of its solution didn't also exist. Here we have a problem: are vast numbers of workers and their allies--all of whom suffer under capitalism and none of whom has yet received communist leadership based on the line of *Road to Revolution IV*--winnable now and during the struggle for power to fight for an egalitarian way of life described by Marx and others as the higher phase of communism?

The argument that capitalism's crass morality and ideology have rendered workers too selfish, too backward for them to fight from the outset for egalitarianism leaves a lot to be desired. It examines only one aspect of the contradiction, the obvious one. We all recognize that selfishness is the dominant motivator under capitalism. We should also agree that workers have an enormous stake in fighting against it. Certainly no one has yet argued against *Road to Revolution IV* by attempting to show that workers have a material interest in perpetuating social inequality. The dispute rather seems to concern the viability of speeding up the ideological struggle. *Road to Revolution IV* argues that in fact, when left to their own devices, workers have often implemented major facets of egalitarianism. Some of the criticisms dispute this, but the point is overwhelmingly in *Road to Revolution IV's* favor when one examines the history of the communist movement in the twentieth century.

In the revolutionary upsurge of 1917-1921 in the Soviet Union, the worldwide struggle against fascism in World



War II, the Chinese Revolution, the battles against imperialism of the 1950's, 60s and 70s in Asia and Africa and in many other struggles, the response of millions was to live in a manner which contradicted capitalist social organization. Practice once again outstrips theory. The one development that did not occur during these struggles was a break by the official communist leadership with the traditional two-stage theory of winning power and building the new society.

In the second place, it is also useful to look further back in history than the communist movement and examine the forces that have motivated masses in precapitalist and early capitalist societies. The traditional capitalism-socialism-higher-phase-of-communism timetable alludes to the final stage of communism as the latter-day version of primitive communism, the dominant social form when classes had not yet developed and the basic contradiction of life pitted humanity against nature. However, it is also one-sided to assume that the thousands of years between the fall of primitive communism and the Communist Manifesto were characterized exclusively by the ideology of self-interest. To be sure, as Marx and Engels pointed out, the ruling ideology of a period will be the ideology of the ruling class, and therefore the world-view of the leading exploiter will dominate the superstructure of any stratified society.

But the history of humanity since primitive communism is also the history of class struggle, and classes have fought bitterly for many centuries over ideas as well as wealth, possessions, and the physical necessities of life. It is a serious distortion of history to pretend that under slavery and feudalism the masses fought exclusively for the modern equivalent of a ten-cent raise. One need not fall into the idealist illusion that scientific communist ideology has existed for thousands of years to see just how far back in history oppressed classes have put ideological incentive over material gain and, furthermore how profound a motivating force in the class struggle has been the striving for some vision of equality.

## **GREECE IN THE "GOLDEN AGE" -- COMMUNITY OVER INDIVIDUAL**

The "Golden Age of Athens" is generally regarded as the most advanced pre-Roman European society. The great achievements of Greek architecture, sculpture, philosophy, and science appeared during and in the wake of the 50-year period in Athens that saw the flowering of political democracy. We know this democracy had severe limitations: women couldn't vote; and Athenian wealth grew from the exploitation of colonies, a contradiction that was to hasten Athens' downfall. All the same, Athenian democracy was a revolutionary breakthrough in its time. If we are to believe the words of Pericles, Athens' most capable leader and its dominant political force during this period, political rather than material incentive remained the most effective method of stimulating the citizen population in time of crisis. In his famous funeral oration at the burial of the first dead of the war between Athens and Sparta, Pericles starkly contrasts the openness of Athenian society with Sparta's oligarchy, and the vibrance of Athens' culture with the sterility of Sparta's. The important point to retain is that the greatest statesman of his age relied primarily on the ideological commitment of the Athenian citizenry to defend a democratic way of life. He says, "[We do not believe] that a man who pays no attention to politics minds his own business. We say he has no business here at all." Later, he explains that the soldiers who died fighting against Sparta surrendered something less valuable than they would have lost had they lived to see the defeat of Athenian democracy. "Some are brave out of ignorance. Others are brave out of fear. But he who can most truly be accounted brave is the man who knows the meaning of what is sweet in life and what is terrible and who then goes out undeterred to meet what is to come." The contradiction between crass material self-interest and commitment to political goals whose realization may require considerable self-sacrifice thus dates back at least 2400 years.

### **CHRISTIAN EGALITARIANISM**

The initial phase of Christianity probably represents the first mass egalitarian movement. Religion has played a reactionary role for thousands of years, but the early Christians nonetheless contributed certain concepts with revolutionary implications for a society based on slavery, empire and the accumulation of monumental wealth in the hands of a few rulers. If one cuts through the mumbo jumbo about Jesus as the "Son of God", the early Christian leaders appear not as 'saints' but rather as political organizers building a movement against the social inequities of their time. The idea that the kingdom of heaven belongs to the poor, that a rich man can enter it less easily than a camel can pass through the eye of a needle, or that charity' is a virtue greater than even hope or faith-- these concepts arose from a mass struggle two thousand years ago whose participants aspired in many ways to a life without social stratification. The revolutionary content of these ideas was not lost on the Roman ruling class, which otherwise would hardly have taken the trouble to torture and murder the early Christians as vehemently as it did.

For a variety of reasons which Marxism enables us to understand, Christianity was ultimately coopted and the church became and remains one of society's most oppressive institutions. But, one should not lose sight of the contradiction's other aspect as it developed historically: the fact remains that an ideology based on a vision of egalitarianism has existed in some form for a long time.

The brief violent revolt of peasants known in France as the Jacquerie had been a mass upsurge without a program. Its English counterpart a generation later developed a conscious political line. The Lollard priests and others who stood up against the feudal church had made an impression on the peasants. So too had John Ball, with his theory of 'leveling:'

"Matters cannot go well in England until all things shall be held in common; when there shall be neither vassals or lords, when the lords shall be no more masters than ourselves. . . Are we not all descended from the same parents, Adam and Eve?" (quoted in Barbara Tuchman's *A Distant Mirror*; p.374)

Although they could not bring about the society they envisioned, the Levelers could still perceive the inescapable contradictions of a stratified social order, As they roamed the countryside, telling willing ears that if human beings had a common origin and a common end, if everyone was equalized by death, then the peasants were not obligated to accept the Church's dogma that inequality on earth was the will of god. Many "backward" peasants six hundred years ago must have agreed with this line: otherwise the rulers of the time would not have shuttled Ball, the movement's ideologue, from prison to prison for twenty years.

## THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

By all estimates, the French Revolution stands as the greatest of bourgeois movements. It also produced the first proletarian countermovement to claim the name communism. The triumphant capitalists distorted the ideas of liberty, equality and brotherhood for their own class purposes. However, they could not fulfill their goals without mass support, and since this revolution brought about the most radical transformation of society yet seen, it could not prevent social inequality from emerging as a mass question. By far the greatest of prerevolutionary political theorists was Jean-Jacques Rousseau, with his idea that "the earth's fruits belong to all, the earth itself to no one," and his profound dialectical insight that "The first man who closed off a plot of land, who said 'This is mine,' and who found people foolish enough to believe him, was the true founder of civil society." At the height of the revolutionary struggle, the implications of this idea were to make a deep impression on Gracchus Babeuf, the man generally acknowledged as the first communist organizer and certainly the furthest left of all the French revolutionaries.

One need hardly point out that in modern histories of the French Revolution, little mention is made of Babeuf or of his writings. Although he failed, although others before him failed, and although as various arguments against *Road to Revolution IV* have indicated, the revolutionary process has yet to produce a society free from material incentive, the historical record nonetheless shows that for thousands of years, the aspiration toward non-stratified, egalitarian life has been a deeply imbedded element of class struggle and class consciousness. Winning, of course, is another matter, but the knowledge that for centuries before Marx, masses lived and died fighting for aspects of this concept should embolden us and broaden our thinking about what a scientifically organized party can accomplish *now* and what it should set as its goals and slogans.

It has been further argued against *Road to Revolution IV* that egalitarianism is premature in the initial stage of proletarian dictatorship because revolutionary commitment is too uneven and because building a base for the party will require too many concessions to the "inevitable backwardness" of the masses. These concessions, the argument goes, are required to maintain unity.

In order to consider this point, one must first examine the line and logic of *Road to Revolution III* the operating strategy of the PLP between 1969 and 1981. *RR III* argued that the reversal of socialism in the USSR, China and elsewhere came about because the communist parties had failed to win workers to proletarian dictatorship and revolutionary ideology and because this failure made subsequent concessions to capitalist forces inevitable. *RR III* already set forth a concept of revolution substantially different in some respects from the Bolshevik model. It advanced the thesis that political power emanates less from the barrel of a gun than from the political ideology of the worker holding the gun. It stated further that most people, except those who cast their lot with the enemy, are winnable, and that victory for the party means recruiting them to its ranks. *RR III* strongly implied that state power cannot be won, much less retained, without a qualitatively larger mass party and movement committed to proletarian dictatorship than the party and movement led by the Bolsheviks.

Either the line makes sense or it doesn't. The operating strategy of our party in the decade preceding *Road to Revolution IV* was based on the premise that it does. The arguments set forth in contradiction to *Road to Revolution IV* do not explicitly put *RR III* into question. However, the logic of many of them contradicts *RR III* nonetheless, because *Road to Revolution IV* represents the step beyond *RR III*.

*RR III* broke with the traditional estimate about the concessions needed under socialism to the "backwardness" of the masses. It said that most workers could be won to fight for their own class dictatorship. The dictatorship of the proletariat is not an abstraction, nor is it simply millions of workers running around with guns: Iran in 1981 was hardly a workers' state. One must also know the ideas the guns are fighting to carry out and the political and social content of the government they protect. *Road to Revolution IV* argues that from its inception, the communist movement was weighted down with too much excess baggage, that if workers have more or less on their own done all the things alluded to above as well as many others for a vision of egalitarianism, then they will fight willingly and enthusiastically for a proletarian dictatorship based on egalitarian principles, **provided the communist party gives them the leadership to do so.**

This is the crux of the question. Backwardness is an aspect of everyone's ideology. The category of likeness and difference is based on reality; therefore different methods of struggle are needed to deal with different forces. But the call for concessions to the masses argues for a flexible line. It disputes the notion that the masses are winnable to the proletarian dictatorship and implies--or in some cases states overtly--that most workers will need guns held to their heads to live in an egalitarian society without wage slavery. One can dispute in the abstract until one is blue in the face about what workers will accept. Practice remains the ultimate arbiter. If you believe in inevitable backwardness, you won't fight for a very advanced line. If you believe there is a basis to transform this

backwardness into its opposite, you will fight for advanced concepts. One thing is certain: no proletarian dictatorship has ever fought to implement communist principles, and no proletarian dictatorship remains standing in the world today.

As *Road to Revolution IV* points out, the question of wages and the maintenance of the wage system lies at the center of socialism's reversal. *Road to Revolution IV* calls into question Marx's theorem that after the seizure of state power, bourgeois rights must be partially maintained as a concession to the birthmarks bequeathed to socialism by the old way of life. The modern argument that wages remain essential under socialism constitutes an attempt to have one's cake and eat it too, because underneath the argument lies the assumption that a distinction is possible between "capitalist" and "socialist" wages. The distinction is specious. When Marx called for maintaining the wage system under socialism, he did not deny that wages remain a capitalist institution: the money equivalent of labor power sold on the market as a commodity, the only commodity owned by workers. Wages are synonymous with capitalism. A system of distribution based on equality cannot be a wage system. Either one keeps a form of capitalist wages or one abolishes wages altogether. There is no middle ground. This is really the decisive issue raised by *Road to Revolution IV*--along with the absolute primacy of the party. *RR III* already analyzed the fundamental error of the old movement as a right-wing tendency to build socialism on a capitalist cornerstone. This was a radical insight, but it didn't go far enough. Now *Road to Revolution IV* takes the necessary next step by saying that the reversal of socialism did not come about because too many concessions were made, but rather because of the nature of the concessions. The error lay not simply in settling the question of *how* to build socialism: at the root of the matter stood the problem of precisely *what* to build under the proletarian dictatorship.

Commodity production is capitalism. If over an entire historical period one concedes the retention of wages and commodities in essence, while merely changing their form, then it is difficult to see how commodities and wages will wither away of their own accord. History proves that quite the opposite is the case. Wages beget wages and stratification; one commodity begets many--the issue is qualitative, not one of "dosage." A proletarian dictatorship that produces commodities has always gone on to produce more, not less, and to reconstitute itself as state capitalism. None of the arguments against *Road to Revolution IV* has demonstrated that "socialist wages" would follow a different course of development.

*Road to Revolution IV* calls for bypassing the phase of socialist development and moving directly to communism. It has been argued in opposition to this view that socialism is an inevitable feature of revolutionary development, a positive concept that should be retained once certain errors in it have been corrected.

In the first place, one should take care before canonizing a development as inevitable. Marx stated that his most important contribution was not the discovery of class struggle or even the analysis of surplus labor, but rather the proof that workers' revolution and proletarian dictatorship were consistent with the laws of development. This analysis is firmly rooted in the history of class struggle, the laws of dialectics, and plain common sense--oppressed classes have always ultimately triumphed over their oppressors. There may be some logic to the notion that restoration of capitalism by the first socialist states was inevitable because development is always uneven and the Bolsheviks had no previous experience to draw on, while the Chinese had only the Bolsheviks as models.

When Marx and Lenin spoke of socialism, they meant a period of transition to a higher form of society during which the workers' state had no choice but to preserve the wage system, stratification, and significant elements of bourgeois rights. And this is precisely what was built in the Soviet Union, China and elsewhere. Only the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution's left wing seems to have broken with this notion, and it neither broke radically enough nor succeeded in freeing itself from the cult of Mao.

It matters little whether one retains the name socialism or comes up with something else. The important point is the

content. The only plausible argument for retaining stratification under the dictatorship of the proletariat is the line that the party must capitulate to "birthmarks," "backwardness" and the "unwinnability of the masses," a line endorsed in one form or another by all the two-stage theorists. While our party recognizes that it stands on the shoulders of giants, that we would improve if we fought for our line one-tenth as hard as they, and that we are merely the inheritors of a great revolutionary tradition, the fact remains that if we build the dictatorship of the proletariat around the same old line, we will produce the same results. *That*, at least, is inevitable.

The advanced elements of the movement have always fought against the theory of stages. Lenin rips it apart in *What Is To Be Done?* The problem seems to have occurred in practice: the great revolutionaries rejected opportunism in principle but surrendered to it in life under the strain of certain pressures. Such is the line that led to the demise of the old movement: seize power; then, at all costs, avoid "sectarian" errors under the dictatorship of the proletariat and make "necessary" concessions to "backwardness;" establish a line of struggle around the immediate economic and political goals of the party; then, "over a period of time," backwardness will disappear and the peaceful transition to communism will take place.

The argument here and in *Road to Revolution IV* estimates that the transformation cannot occur unless the party fights for the most advanced concept from the outset. In the course of development, even more advanced concepts will arise. Our problem, like the problem of all revolutionary forces in the world, can never be the "backwardness of the masses." The greatest obstacle before us remains our own backwardness. For more than two thousand years, the masses have fought for aspects of egalitarianism. Given this history and the record of the dictatorship of the proletariat, we have no reason to believe that we can or should try to win the working class to fight for a line that has already failed rather than for the best line possible.

What has never been done before sooner or later always gets done. The earth *is* round and *does* orbit the sun. "True freedom," as the Digger Winstanley said, "lies in community in spirit and community in the earthly treasury," and if those who would achieve it must "turn the world upside down" and must make enemies doing so, then so be it. We communists have enemies, but they are the right enemies. We also have friends: they are the right friends, and they number in the billions.

The general trend of history is not only forward motion and revolution in geometrically increasing swiftness. Slavery lasted thousands of years; feudalism, a bit more than one thousand. The revolutionary bourgeoisie could not shake the spectre of the militant proletariat even at the very moment of capitalist triumph and barely a century and a quarter after this triumph, the first workers' dictatorship was established. Fighting for communist aspirations now cannot be utopian when only communist aspirations will meet the needs of the majority. Communist ideas will become a material force capable of changing history when communists fight for them without compromise. Once we overcome our backwardness in this regard, we shall see how rapidly the "backwardness of the masses" dissipates.

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## Professor Asks:

# Should We Bother About Communism?

In the course of our Party's year of discussion around Road to Revolution (IV) many works, both Marxist and non-Marxist were cited and quoted. One that deserves particular examination is *Marx on the Choice Between Socialism and Communism*, by Prof. Stanley Moore.

Our movement is part of the nearly century-and-a-half-old communist movement founded by Marx in opposition to all other sorts of socialism, and further advanced by Lenin and other communist revolutionaries. Our disputes center on the problem of how to realize communism.

Prof. Moore, on the other hand, denies the possibility that communism can ever exist. He regards the struggle for communism as illusory, intellectually unfounded, and self-defeating. He argues that the ideal of communism is incompatible with the materialist approach to history, that you cannot get to a communist goal from the principles of historical materialism. He regards Marx's attachment to communism as a young man's passion that he was forever unwilling to abandon, but never able to defend. His book is intended to prove that point; he raises the issues our enemies should raise, and does so in a scrupulously scholarly way that befits a professor emeritus of philosophy published by Harvard University Press.

Moore is very clear about his aim. He writes:

A communist economy is incompatible with a complex culture. The goal of establishing such an economy, immediately or ultimately, is therefore incompatible with the goal of creating a social order where the free development of each is conditioned by the free development of all.

The evidence of the historical record -- stretching back to 1917 and now including 15 countries where communists hold power -- renders wholly improbable the transition to communism predicted by Marx and Lenin...

The dogma that socialism must be the prelude to communism has proved an increasingly serious obstacle to developing efficient, dynamic socialist economies in countries under communist control...

More than economic issues are involved in the choice between socialism and communism as a final goal. The dogma that socialism must be the prelude to communism serves to justify repressive features of societies under communist rule, in the face of criticism from socialist dissidents within such societies and from those revisionists outside them inaccurately called Eurocommunists. The economic counterpart of their demands for political democracy and cultural pluralism is the demand for increasing the role of the markets, as devices for dispersing decisions and multiplying options, within a framework of planning. All three demands can be linked and strengthened through a reasoned rejection of communism as a final goal. (pp. viii-x)

We are for political democracy for the working class, we want to disperse decisions and multiply options, we support cultural pluralism, and we stand for social planning in the working class' interest. But we link and strengthen these demands through a reasoned rejection of socialism as an interim goal, an affirmation of communism as an interim goal, and a reaffirmation of communism as a final goal. The issue could not be more perfectly joined as between ourselves as the inheritors and exponents of Marx and Lenin, and Moore, as representative of all those, from LaSalle to Deng Xiaoping, who revise and deny revolutionary Marxism. Moore points out that the distinction between socialism and communism is that socialism abolishes exploitation but not exchange. Communism abolishes both. He then comments that

to recognize [this] is to confront the problem of demonstrating that a society that has abolished exploitation but not exchange is in some sense inferior to a society that has abolished both. Lenin does not argue the superiority of communism. Nor does Engels. Both treat it as demonstrated truth, and for this demonstration they look to Marx. Yet where in Marx's writings is that demonstration to be found? ...I shall attempt to show that his major arguments for the superiority of communism rely on moral and philosophical principles...incompatible with his materialist approach to history. (p.7)

Moore's demonstration is as follows: Before he became converted to communism, Marx developed a critique of capitalist society founded on a moral critique he derived from the German humanist philosopher Feuerbach. Feuerbach, according to Moore, had the idea that "men differ from other animals in possessing both an outer and an inner life. In his inner life he is conscious of sharing the essential nature of all men." "This," says Moore, "is the doctrine that underlies Marx's characterization of man as a species being in *On the Jewish Question*, *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, and *The Holy Family*."

Marx's critique further states that modern exchange economies dehumanize men, force them to act as isolated individuals caught in a war of each against all. This is a cleavage between existence and essence, which is described as "estrangement." "Estrangement" is a condition in which man gives up something that is his own (alienation) which results in conflict; what man has relinquished confronts him as a hostile and destructive power.

The remedy for estrangement produced by capitalist institutions is to bring men's existence into harmony with their essence in a social order based on the principle of community, the unity of man with man. "This is the doctrine," writes Moore, "that underlies Marx's call for a return from society to community." Finally, this return to community is seen to occur with the victory of communism -which is a revolutionary political, movement of the working class.

Although in later years Marx disowned Feuerbach's account of human nature, and broke with his former philosophical convictions, Moore points out that Marx never rejected his communist conclusions, but only the premise from which he arrived at them.

More importantly, argues Moore, Marx's new premises actually contradict his communist conclusions, and this is the philosophic reason for the persistent challenge of revisionism in the history of Marxist doctrinal disputes.

## **HISTORICAL MATERIALISM VS PHILOSOPHIC COMMUNISM**

Marx's new premises are the body of ideas known as historical materialism. Moore describes historical materialism as being "centered on the problem of exploitation, the conflict of proletarians with bourgeoisie." The earlier premise, "philosophic communism," is centered on the problem of estrangement, the conflict of human essence with human existence.

"That the problems differ," comments Moore, "can be shown by asking whether ending exploitation is sufficient to end estrangement, and if it is not, what else is required. (pp. 11-12)

We might better ask, in the light of history, whether socialism ends' exploitation, whether exploitation can ever be ended without at the same time ending estrangement. The answer, which history shows is No, will show that the problems do not differ.

Moore's error, throughout his entire work, is to reduce historical materialism to economic determinism. He deletes all aspects of historical materialism that deal with the interaction of the ideological superstructure and the material base. He defines historical materialism as a system of economic analysis. For example, he writes, "In predicting the end of commodity fetishism Marx uses only the language of historical materialism...examination of his account of capitalist accumulation reveals no economic grounds for predicting the end of commodity exchange." (p. 62)

No revolutionary Marxist ever held that economic grounds alone caused any change in society. In a letter on this very point Engels wrote

Political, juridical, philosophical, religious, literary, artistic, etc. development is based on economic development. But all these react upon one another and also upon the economic basis. It is not that the economic condition is the cause and alone active, while everything else is only a passive effect. There is, rather, interaction on the basis of economic necessity, which *ultimately* always asserts itself. (Letter to Borgius, Jan. 25, 1894. Emphasis by Engels.)

And Mao Zedong, wrote on this point:

True, the productive forces, practice and 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 of the relations of production, theory, and the superstructure in turn manifest themselves in the principal and decisive role...The creation

and advocacy of revolutionary theory plays the principal role in those times of which Lenin said, "Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary. Movement." When a task, no matter what, has to be performed, but there is as yet no guiding line, method, plan or policy, the principal and decisive thing is to decide on a guiding line, method, plan or policy. When the superstructure (politics, culture, etc.) obstructs the development of the economic base, political and cultural change becomes principal and decisive. Are we going against materialism when we say this? No. The reason is that while we recognize that in the general development of history the material determines the mental and social being determines social consciousness, we also -- and indeed must -- recognize the reaction of mental on material things, of social consciousness on social being, and of the superstructure on the economic base. This does not go against materialism; on the contrary, it avoids mechanical ~J materialism and upholds dialectical materialism. (*On Contradiction*)

As a result of his fundamental error, Moore is satisfied to conceive a critique of the essence of Marxist thought (which he states "is relevant to the present, perhaps even to the future.") without bothering with the accumulated historical experience which conditioned, proved, disproved and developed that body of thought. In the name of historical materialism Moore dispenses with history.

Consequently, Moore, straining for effect; can at best only point to instances where Marx, faced with the problem of peering into the future with no practical experience to guide him, had to fall back on his philosophical system to suggest a possible, and therefore very generalized, resolution of future social contradictions. This has always been philosophy's role in human thought. Before man's practical experience with his environment develops, he can only explain the world through idea systems. Only after experience has been gained and mastery achieved does science develop. Moore can attack communism only by refusing to investigate the actual history of the worldwide communist revolution, which means an investigation of its ideas and practice. And he can justify this only by stripping historical materialism of its historical materialist content.

Moore's argument for market socialism collapses altogether, and its irrelevancy becomes stark, exactly at the mid-point of his book. There he is forced to concede, in that curiously inverted language his decomposition of historical materialism requires him to use:

...the trends [Marx] predicts in the development of the forces of production are insufficient, by themselves, to produce the transition he predicts from socialism to communism. Those trends would prove incompatible with the production of wage labor and commodity exchange only if they resulted in the total fusion of labor and enjoyment. But, as Marx discusses them in *Capital*, they approach this goal without ever reaching it. At some point they may create a situation where socialism becomes possible: at no point will they create a situation where socialism becomes impossible. This conclusion accords with the language of the *Critique*, where Marx writes of a situation when men "can" -- not where they must -- replace socialism with communism.

...The argument from historical materialism proves at most that classless economies will develop to a point where men can choose between socialism and communism. The prediction that they will then choose communism rests wholly upon ~he argument from distributive justice. (pp. 44-45)

, And further on he writes:

To weigh the textual evidence is to reject the claim that Marx's analysis of capitalist accumulation culminates in predicting transition to a specifically socialist economy. This is not to assert that it predicts transition to a communist economy but that, taken literally, it is neutral between the two. (p. 56)

So here we have a scholar whose stated aim is to prove the "conflict between communism, and historical materialism." He intentionally emasculates historical materialism to allow him to reach his goal. Then, despite all this, he is forced to concede that even looking at the matter through his distorted presentation of historical materialism, there is no conflict. Even his brand of historical materialism "proves...economies will develop to the point where men can choose...communism," and even directly from the point of capitalism. Such a scholar is an ass in lion's skin. He is a con artist. ~', His book is a hoax.

But even though Moore's argument dissolves of its own accord, his specific points are useful to examine since they are likely to be raised r. by others.

Moore summarizes Marx's moral premise as follows:



Men's productive work connects them with their fellow men -with the universal, the species. To make this service of th

**Socialist society is, in reality, and is seen by workers who live under it as, a capitalist society.**

universal, not the unintended consequence, but the conscious motive of human activity, is to achieve distinctly human status and dignity. This requires transformation of productive work into an end in itself, total fusion of labor and enjoyment in free activity. But the cleavage between labor and enjoyment inherent in an exchange economy is incompatible with this goal. The motive of those who exchange, either products for products, or work for products, is to earn a living -- to receive an income and spend it satisfying egoistic needs. Their work is not free activity but forced labor. Dehumanizing and estrangement -- conflict between human existence and human essence -- are therefore inextricably embedded in exchange.

Another critique by Marx is summarized by Moore this way:

Exchange develops with the division of labor. Both separate labor from enjoyment. This cleavage produces a conflict between the interest of each individual and the common interest of all the individuals made interdependent by division of labor and commodity exchange. Because each individual seeks only his particular interest, the common interest confronts him -- in the market and the state -- as an alien and coercive power. This estrangement cannot be ended, forced labor cannot be replaced by free activity, with- out ending both division of labor and exchange.

And quoting Marx directly:

We perceive therefore that wages and private property are identical. For wage labor -- where labor is in the pay of its product, its object -- is only a necessary consequence of the estrangement of labor. Where labor is paid a wage it appears, not as an end in itself, but as the servant of wages...A compulsory increase in wages...would therefore be nothing but higher payment to the slave: it would not win for the laborer or his labor their human status and dignity. Even equality of payment...would merely reduplicate the relation of contemporary laborers to their labor as a 'relation of all men to labor. Society would then be perceived as an abstract capitalist. (p. 14.ouotes from *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, para. 59-61)

This is precisely the nub of what is wrong with socialism. Socialist society (which has not even tried equality of payment, but instead is based on piece-work wages) is in reality, and is so perceived by the workers who live in it, a capitalist society of a particular form.

But Marx's insight went deeper: As Moore points out, Marx anticipated and argues against the notion of material incentives because he felt they were incompatible with the development of communism. Marx wrote that "Socialism...is the positive self-consciousness of man...just as real life is the positive reality of man, no longer mediated through the transcendence of private property -- through communism.

Moore explains that what Marx means by this is to attack

moral attitudes...in an economy ...[where] producers (are not paid wages but nonetheless)...will work to satisfy needs that are egoistic rather than comm:una1...They will therefore work for the sake of being paid, in the sense that they will not regard their work as an end in itself...He is concerned here, not with survival of exploitation through exchange, but with survival of the cleavage between labor and enjoyment -with what is now called the question of material incentives. (p.17)

So here we have Marx, 140 years ago, anticipating and condemning the most "modern" "progressive" "practical" and "advanced" social development policies adopted by the leaders of all the socialist countries. You can't get to communism on that road, says Marx.

What are Moore's reply, and the reply as well of the politicians who lead the established communist movement? "Good, says Moore. "I don't want to go there." "We may want to go there," intone the politicians, "but later on, in the sweet bye and bye."

According to Moore, communism has no point, is not necessary, is not superior to socialism, and is anyway impossible to achieve for sociological, philosophical and economic reasons. Why has communism no point? Because, says Moore, Marx is inconclusive. He

neither asserts nor denies that disappearance of class distinctions will be accompanied by abolition of exchange.

Now this is either an altogether absurd point, or else Moore saying that it is not the abolition of exchange that produces classlessness, but rather the abolition of exploitation; and secondly, that if socialism did not produce classlessness Marx is not asserting that communism will either.

Who in his right mind would argue that socialism has produced classlessness, or is evolving in that direction? On the contrary, the old class relations are maintained with new personnel and in new forms consistent with the mixed state-private capitalism that is the essence of socialism. So if state ownership of the means of production means the end of exploitation, clearly classlessness is not a by-product of the ending of exploitation.

## **DOES STATE OWNERSHIP MEAN NO EXPLOITATION?**

But does state ownership mean the end of exploitation? History shows that state ownership by itself does not affect the relations of production one way or another. In place of the old capitalist class, the state appears as an abstract capitalist. And even this appearance changes as the party becomes nepotistic and corrupt. The state as abstract capitalist is replaced by the party as concrete capitalist. Exploitation therefore can remain despite state ownership, though in a somewhat altered way. So long as the working class does not control the state it produces surplus labor in conditions of state ownership of the means of production. The economic condition required for this state of affairs to exist is the existence of labor power as private property. Destroy the wage labor relationship and you destroy at the same time the foundation for the state existing as a hostile and alien power opposed to the working class. Socialism, in other words, cannot produce or evolve toward classlessness, but communism can.

Why is communism unnecessary? Because, according to Moore, though class conflict is an evil, it is rooted in the more general evil of egoism and self-interest. Can egoism be abolished all at once? Obviously not -- perhaps it cannot be abolished at all. If it could be abolished over time, there should be some transitional stage between capitalism and the state that corresponds to the abolition of egoism. But this would require a transitional economy that falls short of abolishing exchange, although it would abolish exploitation. You would have socialism, but not communism.

But if egoism cannot be abolished, then exchange cannot be abolished. The question must then arise: does every institution which channels activities motivated by individual interest toward results promoting collective interests at the same time frustrate some human

**Socialism cannot produce or evolve toward classlessness. Communism can**

need? Put another way, is there a human need for free labor, for total fusion of particular motives with the common good? Alternatively, can there be such a thing as "proletarian individualism?" If there is a need for this fusion, is this need cultural or biological? What is the empirical evidence for its existence? Marx, says Moore, is dogmatically assuming what he ought to prove empirically, but which he cannot prove. Without the proof there is no basis for believing communism is necessary.

This objection is interesting if you mangle historical materialism the way Moore has. Materialism holds that egoism, like all concepts, is an aspect of social consciousness that has its roots in material conditions. If the material conditions are changed, then in time the social consciousness can be changed. Neither egoism, nor any other idea, is genetically handed down. The point to be addressed is what material conditions have to be changed, and in what way, to provide the basis for eliminating egoism and self-interest. But this problem is no different from the problem of ending exploitation. The material basis for solving both problems is the abolition of wage labor. Yet, if wage labor is to be ended in conditions of freedom, then obviously labor must be its own end. This is the essence of the cultural revolution that accompanies communism. To start from the standpoint of individual interest conflicts with, and frustrates, the need to carry out a cultural revolution for labor as free activity, as an end in itself. It is precisely the development of historical materialism that proves the necessity of communism.

Why is communism not superior to socialism? Because, according to Moore, socialism can do everything communism claims to do. Socialism could ultimately be fair he says, and can abolish economic dependence by allotting to non-productive people (children, the disabled, etc.) incomes from the fund for communal needs. Workers could receive wages determined through a competing market for labor. This would produce equilibrium prices for labor power by paying more for harder work, or more dangerous work, and so on, so that socialist wages would be fair. What then would be unfair? According to Marx, any general system of rules is unfair since it

involves applying the same standard to different, differing individuals. But from what conception of fairness does it follow that every respect in which people differ provides grounds for different treatment? Communism therefore is not superior to socialism.

The problem with this objection is that it argues the wrong point. Fairness is not the issue as Moore puts it, because economic dependence is not the question communism is concerned with. It is ironic that Moore should be reduced to this formulation, because it forces him to rely on the very concept of "distributive justice" which he falsely attacks Marx for relying on. The issue for communism is ending class distinctions, abolishing the difference between rich and poor, ending inequality, destroying the concept of self-interest. Even Moore's type of market Socialism (which differs markedly from the market socialism preached about in the socialist countries) could not result in abolishing the evils communism will abolish. This is why Moore finds another set of evils to be concerned about. When communism is well developed and has abolished inequality and self-interest, and is producing abundantly (as that future society will define abundance) then the possibility of overcoming general systems of rules will be present for humanity. Then it will truly be possible to develop a social order in which the free development of each is conditioned by the free development of all. Moore's concept of fairness is appropriate only to one whose horizons extend no further than exchange-dominated, class-ridden societies, such as his socialism. Communism is infinitely superior to socialism.

Why is communism impossible to achieve? According to Moore, communism is economically unworkable, because if you abolish the market you lose all ability to allocate appropriate amounts of labor among specific productive activities. Marx does state that the labor market is needed to translate concrete labor into what he calls universal social labor or average social labor, which is the unit of calculation of labor time. Without knowing how much universal labor is needed for different productive activities, there cannot be an appropriate allocation of labor power. Communism, therefore, has no mechanism for properly proportioning labor time among different kinds of work; but socialist economies with competitive markets can do this, according to Marx's own argument, says Moore. The problem with this objection is that we do not need to know the amount of universal labor time embodied in a product unless we are involved in exchange, and are concerned with making sure that the exchange process is fair. For that you need a mark. But if you have abolished wage labor, doing away with the market would permit injustice only to the extent work diverges from being an end in itself. If this question of injustice does not arise, then all you are left with is the problem of appropriate allocation. That problem is managed by knowing the amount of concrete labor you require. Stalin put it this way:

In the second phase of communist society, the amount of labor expended on the production of goods will be measured, not in a roundabout way, not through value and its forms, as is the case under commodity production, but directly and immediately by the amount of time, the number of hours, expended in the production of goods. As to the distribution of labor, its distribution among the branches of production will be regulated, not by the law of value, which will have ceased to function by that time, but by the growth of society's demand for goods... (*Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*)

Communism is unworkable only for those who don't want it to work.

Communism cannot be achieved, according to Moore, because it requires ending the division of labor. As Marx put it:

In a communist society no one has a single, exclusive sphere of activity; each can cultivate any field he likes. Society regulates the general production, and so makes it possible for me to do this today, that tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, raise cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I please -- without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, cowherd or critic.

If you end specialization you nonetheless retain differentiation of functions, and in this example introduce fluidity of occupations. How can society regulate production where occupation is a matter of individual choice, as Marx demands? Exchange is more necessary than ever before, says Moore, with the planning authorities regulating production through differential wages, paying more for more needed types of labor, less for other types of labor. Thus,

**Communism is unworkable only for those who don't want it to work.**

Moore argues, ending the division of labor makes communism impossible,

Moore cannot conceive of any institutional arrangements other than the ones he has lived with. But the "ignorant" Chinese peasants, who could not read Marx, let alone Moore, were able to conceive and began to develop institutions not based on the division of labor during the period of the peoples' communes, Where society is decentralized, and communist labor is the rule, ending the division of

labor, ending specialization while retaining fluidity of functions, becomes very achievable. It is precisely this way that the state ceases to be an alien and hostile power. Complexity of culture is advanced through decentralization combined with central planning; and based on peoples' eagerness to work for society. The key is abolishing wage labor. Communism is achievable for those who wish to be free. That is why we should bother with it.

*Thought about and written voluntarily, without hope of gain, January 1982*

# Hidden History of Workers' Struggles: Fighting to Build An Egalitarian Society

An egalitarian, working class, truly democratic, collectivist society has been the goal of oppressed workers and peasants for thousands of years. Recorded history, although always written by the bosses, tells of hundreds, if not thousands, of such revolts which aimed not only at an end to the immediate repression, but at a just, egalitarian society. The Old Testament reflects, though indirectly, the struggle of the oppressed workers and peasants of ancient Palestine; Greek historians tell of the social goals of rebelling slaves; medieval chronicles allow us to catch a glimpse of dozens of revolts by European peasants and workers in the towns of Italy, Germany, France and England. The Peasants' War of Germany, and the Levellers of the mid-17th Century Puritan revolt in England; the black, white and Native American slaves of Bacon's rebellion and of dozens of other slave revolts in the American colonies; the French Revolution; the Revolt of the Foreign Brigades of George Washington's army against their brutal "gentlemen" officers in January, 1780; Shay's Rebellion; the beginnings of the trade union movement -- these among others all testify to the vision of justice and equality in the hearts of the working people. The history of China is one of great peasant revolts for a "kingdom of heavenly peace" (e.g. the T'ai-p'ing Revolt of the mid-19th century.)

From the beginning of class society thousands of years ago, the struggles of oppressed peasants and workers has been the main force behind social progress; the contradictions between the ruling classes and the oppressed, exploited masses has been the main determinant of human progress.

Our Party stands in this, the "great tradition" of the working class and the human race. The international communist movement emerged in the mid-19th century in Europe, where the class struggles of oppressed workers were sharpest, the antagonisms between exploiter and exploited most acute, and capitalism most highly developed. The communist movement and Marxism-Leninism, the science of revolution, made it possible for the first time for workers and exploited people to learn, from past experience and from a scientific analysis of the conditions of capitalism and imperialism, how to improve their struggle, overcome past shortcomings, and bring the final goal of worldwide communism out of the mists of utopian never-never land and into the near future. Since the spread of communist ideas and science around the world, workers' revolts are virtually a daily occurrence.

While all these previous struggles for a just society ended, at last; in failure due to internal weaknesses within the movements they represented, the history of these struggles nonetheless the history of these struggles gives witness to the desire of working people for a communist, egalitarian society, and the readiness with which workers can be, and have been, won to struggling for just those goals. Studying the history of these struggles can do more than help us learn how to avoid their errors, crucial as that is. We should never become cynical about these earlier struggles. Without them, we would not have arrived at *Road to Revolution (IV)*. Despite the setbacks, these earlier struggles were basically positive. Learning about them proves that there is no basis for hopelessness about the potential of workers everywhere for overcoming racism, sexism, individualism, anti-communism, materialism and the other trappings of the decadent bosses. For these reasons, we present below excerpts from longer works describing some of the great workers' and peasants' struggles of the past century.

## Peasant Revolts in China (1927)

-Mao Zedong, from *Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan*

The main targets of attack by the peasants are the local tyrants, the evil gentry and lawless landlords, but in passing they also hit out against patriarchal ideas and institutions, against corrupt officials in the cities and against bad practices and customs in the rural areas. In force and momentum the attack is tempestuous; those who bow before it survive, and those who resist perish.

As a result, the privileges which the feudal landlords enjoyed for thousands of years are being shattered to pieces. Every bit of the dignity and prestige built up by the landlords is being swept into the dust. With the collapse of the power of the landlords, the peasant associations have now become the sole organs of authority and the popular slogan "All power to the peasant associations" has now become a reality. Even trifles such as a quarrel between husband and wife are brought to the peasant association. Nothing can be settled unless someone from the peasant association is present. The association actually dictates all rural affairs, and quite literally, "whatever it says, goes." Those who are outside the associations can only speak well of them, and cannot say anything against them. The local tyrants, evil gentry and lawless landlords have been deprived of all right to speak, and none of them dares even mutter dissent. In the face of the peasant associations' power and pressure, the top local tyrants and evil gentry have fled to Shanghai...

In the Ching Dynasty, the household census compiled by the local authorities consisted of a regular register and "the other register," the former for honest people, and the latter for burglars, bandits and similar undesirables. In some places the peasants now use this method to scare those who formerly opposed the associations. They say, "Put their names down in the other register!"

...In short, what was looked down upon four months ago as a "gang of peasants" has now become a most honorable institution. Those who formerly prostrated themselves before the power of the gentry now bow before the power of the peasants. No matter what their identity, all admit that the world since last October is a different one.

## Revenge on a Landlord (China, late 1940s)

-Schell and Esherick, from *Modern China*, quoting from an unnamed source

That same day a mass meeting was called...about eighty people came to complain against Wang the landlord, while the rest of the village watched, among them Wang's wife and daughter. The crowd accused the landlord of many crimes, including betrayal of Resistance members to the Japanese, robbing them of grain, forcing them into labor gangs. At last, he was asked if he admitted to the accusations.

"All these things I have done," he said...

...Over the fields now sounded an angry roar, as of the sea, and the crowd broke into a wild fury. Everybody shouted at once, proclaiming against the landlord...

*{The passage then describes how the peasants hung the landlord upside down from a tree until he began to confess his crimes one by one. In then continues}*

As soon as the meeting was over, twenty or thirty men went to the landlord's house, drove the wife and daughter out of doors and sealed the house. The two women went to a nearby village to stay with relatives.

That evening the five cadres and those who had taken an active part in the struggle against the landlord walked around the village to listen to the gossip and sample public opinion. Such words were heard as "serves him right; he's so wicked. This is too light for him...just count his sins."

Later that night another meeting of those of the village who wanted to struggle against the landlord was held in a courtyard. This time a hundred and twenty people attended...

Exactly what to do with the landlord was a problem for which the people at first had no solution. Half of those in the meeting thought he should be beaten to death. A few said: "He is too old." Some had no ideas at all. Others thought that his clerk, the rich farmer Shih Tseng-Hua, should be bound up with him at the same time in the struggle.

It was decided that Wang must die for his murders. But how? Should he be sent to the district government to be punished, or should the people kill him, or what?

"If he is tried before a court-martial for treason," said a farmer, "then there will be only one bullet, and that is too cheap for Wang. We ought to kill him first and report to the government afterward."

"Who dares kill him?" asked a farmer doubtfully.

At this everyone shouted at once: "We dare! We dare! He bayoneted our militiamen to death and we can also do that to him..."

Three days after the meeting, the whole village breakfasted early, and shortly after sunrise, seven hundred men and women, including visitors from neighboring villages, many armed with pig knives, hoes, sickles, swords and spears went out to the large field south of

town where the landlord was to be killed. The cadres had written Wang's crimes on large pieces of paper and these, hanging by ropes from trees now fluttered in the breeze..."

A shout went up as landlord Wang was led onto the field. Three guards marched him, pale and shaking, to a willow tree where he was bound up. With his back against the tree, the landlord looked once at the crowd, but quickly bent his head toward the ground again.

...Ma Chiu-tze stepped before the crowd and called for attention. "Now the time has come for our revenge," he announced in a trembling voice. "In what way shall we take revenge on this sinful landlord? We shall kill him."

The crack of palm against cheek rang like a pistol shot on the morning air. A low animal moan broke from the crowd as it leaped into action.

The landlord looked up as he heard the crowd rushing on him. Those nearest saw his lips move, and heard him say "Two words, two words, please."

The man closest shouted: "Don't let him speak!" and in the same breath swung his hoe, tearing the clothes from the bound man's chest and ripping open the lower portion of his body.

The landlord gave one chilling shriek and then bowed his head in resignation. The crowd was on him like beasts...A big farmer swung his pig knife and plunged it directly into the landlord's heart. His body quivered -- even the tree shook -- then slumped, but still the farmer drew his knife in and out, again and again and yet once again.

Landlord Wang was quickly dead, but the rage of the crowd would not abate. The field rang with the shouts of maddened people.

"It is not enough to kill him." "We must put him in the open air." "We must not allow him to be buried for three days."

But convulsive passions do not last long. They burn themselves out. Slowly, the anger of the crowd cooled. The body of the landlord might rot in the open air, and it was better that his wife and daughter be allowed to get him.

That evening...the landlord's wife and daughter brought a mule cart across the field to where their husband and father lay. They wept no tears, but silently lifted the mutilated body into the cart and drove away.

Few saw them come and few saw them go. And no one said a word: For there was nothing left to say. The struggle against the landlord was ended.

Stone Wall Village had turned over.

## Voices of the Commune

*- from a wall poster of the Paris Commune, Mar., 1871, signed by a 120-member committee and by delegates of the National Guard, the workers' militia of the commune.*

...Labor will be organized on a collective basis. Since the aim of life is the unlimited development of our physical, intellectual and moral being, property is and must be the right of each individual to share (by virtue of his individual cooperation) in the collective fruit of the labor of all -- the true basis for social wealth...

There will be no more oppressors or oppressed; no longer any distinction of class among citizens; no longer any barriers among nations. Since the family will be the primary form of association, all families will group themselves in a larger one...nations will fuse into this collective and higher personality: humanity.

*- from a proclamation April 11, 1871, issued by the Central Committee of the Association of Women for the Defense of Paris and Aid to the Wounded, a group of women workers of the commune, as part of their successful effort to form an organization of working women in the city.*

...The fratricidal madness that has taken possession of France, this duel unto death, is the final act in the eternal antagonism between Right and Might, Labor and Exploitation, the People and their Tyrants!

The privileged classes of the present social order are our enemies; those who have lived by our labor, thriving on our want.

They have seen the people rise up, demanding: "No obligations without rights! No rights without obligations! We want to work, but we also want the product of our work. No more exploiters. No more bosses. Work and security for all -- the people to govern themselves -- we want the Commune; we want to live in freedom or to die fighting for it!"

...The decisive hour has come. The old world must come to an end! We want to be free! And France has not risen up alone. The nations of the world have their eye on Paris. They are waiting for our victory to free themselves in their turn...

*- issued May 6, 1871 by the Central Committee of the Association of Women for the Defense of Paris in answer to an appeal by the bosses of France for "conciliation. "*

On behalf of the socialist revolution to which we are dedicated, and "of the battle for the rights of Labor, for Equality and Justice -- the Association of Women...protests with all its might against the shameful proclamation which was addressed to women the day before yesterday by an anonymous group of reactionaries.

This proclamation urges the women of Paris to appeal to the Versailles government's "generosity" and asks for peace at any price.

The generosity of cowardly murderers! Conciliation between freedom and tyranny; between the people and their oppressors!

No, it is not peace but all-out war that the women workers of Paris demand!

Conciliation today amounts to betrayal! It would be a denial of all working-class hopes for total social revolution, for the abolition of all existing social and legal structures, for the elimination of all privileges and forms of exploitation, for the replacement of the rule of Capital by the rule of Labor -- in short, for the emancipation of the working class by the working class...

The struggle in which we are engaged can end only in the victory of the people's cause. Paris will not give in, for it bears the flag of the future. The supreme moment is at hand. All power to the workers! Down with their oppressors...,

The united, determined women of Paris have been aroused and enlightened by the suffering that follows in the wake of all social crises; they are firmly convinced that the Commune -- representing the international revolutionary principles of all peoples -- contains the seeds of the Social Revolution. The women of Paris will prove to France and to the world that at the hour of greatest danger -at the barricades and forts, if the enemy breaks into the city they are as capable as their brothers of giving up their lives in the cause of the Commune, the cause of the People!

Once victorious, men and women workers in complete solidarity will be able to defend their common interests, and with one final effort, they will extinguish all trace of exploitation and exploiters!

Long live the social and international Republic!

Long live Labor!

Long live the Commune!

## **Running Society on a Democratic Centralist Basis (China, late 1940s-mid 1950s)**

- excerpts from *Fanshen*, by William Hinton.



*[Fanshen is a good account of how the Chinese Revolution affected the people of a village called Long Bow. It discusses successes and failures and shows how people's lives were affected. There are serious weaknesses in the book, such as Hinton's downplaying the role of force against class enemies. Also, the Chinese Communist Party made some serious errors at this time, especially winning the peasants to split up the land along families rather than work it collectively. Still, Fanshen shows how democratic centralism can be used to run society. The following excerpts show how Long Bow was run with full participation of the workers, using collective struggle to arrive at decision; with leadership by the Party. This, not bourgeois democracy and elections, is how working people can take control of their lives.]*

Every revolution creates new words. The Chinese Revolution created a whole new vocabulary. A most important word in this vocabulary was *fanshen*. Literally, it means "to turn the body" or "to turn over." To China's hundreds of millions of landless and land-poor peasants, it meant to stand up, to throw off the landlord yoke, to gain land, stock, implements and houses. But it meant more than this. It meant to throw off superstition and study science, to abolish "word blindness" and learn to read, to cease considering women as chattels and establish equality between the sexes, to do away with appointed village magistrates and replace them with elected councils. It meant to enter a new world. That is why this book is called *Fanshen*. It is the story of how the peasants of Long Bow Village built a new world.

To master Marxism-Leninism, to expand each individual's political consciousness, to overcome subjectivism, reduce unprincipled vindictiveness, uproot that small producers' tendency to take advantage of others for personal profit, and unite to build a new world -- this was the struggle that began in April 1946 in Long Bow with the founding of the Communist Party branch there. The struggle continued year after year, with varying intensity and success; no doubt it still goes on.

The vitality of this effort was due to the fact that at all times the transformation of the Party members' outlook was linked to the actual struggle going on in the village to transform the peasants' miserable way of life and forge something better. From the very first day that the branch was set up, its members undertook to lead the village to *fanshen*; and lead they did, for better or worse, thereafter -- not in isolation, of course, but as a basic unit in a nationwide Party of over a million members. The District Committee, the County Committee, the Border Region Committee and the Central Committee with Chairman Mao at its head, all gave them guidance, but in the last analysis they had to do the work; and they were responsible for its success or failure.

The leadership exercised by the Communist Party in Long Bow was not of the kind that most people in the West imagine. The Party could not and did not simply issue orders that the peasants had to obey, even though at certain times and on certain issues a strong tendency toward this type of "commandism," as it was so aptly called, arose among the leading cadres, Communist and non-Communist alike. The Party led the village by virtue of the fact that its members held leading posts (but by no means a monopoly of them) in all the village organizations, won considerable prestige by the example they set, seriously studied problems collectively, and spoke and acted together once they decided on a solution. All this, it should be made clear, must be taken as having been accomplished in a relative sense, for not all the members of the Party were able to win prestige; some won notoriety instead. Also, the decisions of the Party branch were not always taken collectively, the whole membership did not always carry out the decisions when made, and sometimes the decisions that were made were quite wrong. Nevertheless, the Party branch was the best organized, the most active, the most serious and dedicated group in the village, and it tried to lead by example and persuasion, not by force.

*[The following selection follows a description of how the Communists had won the peasants to the political line that would be used to guide the allocation of land. While we don't think that the line used was correct, we do approve in general of the process used to arrive at the line.]*

The classification method used was called *tzu pao kung yi*: or "self report, public appraisal." The "self report" meant that every family head must appear in person and report his sources of income and his economic position prior to the liberation of the village. "Public appraisal" meant that all members of the provisional League must discuss each report and decide, by sense-of-the-meeting, on the family's class status.

Everyone knew that these classification proceedings could transform the Draft Agrarian Law from a general declaration of purpose into a concrete reality. Decisions concerning class status would eventually determine the future of every family. Those classed as poor peasants could expect to gain prestige as members of the new Poor Peasants' League and to acquire prosperity by coming into enough worldly goods to make them new middle peasants. Those classed as rich peasants could expect expropriation of all their surplus property, leaving them with only enough to earn a living like any other *fanshened* peasant. Anyone classified as a landlord faced complete expropriation and then the return of enough property to live on. The classification, in other words, could not be regarded as an academic matter, as a mere nose count, as a census. It laid the basis for economic and social action that affected every family and every

individual in the most fundamental way.

Because this was so, the peasants took an extraordinary interest in the classification meetings and gathered without complaint, day after day, to listen, report, discuss and judge.

It soon became apparent that every family wanted to be classed as far down the scale as possible. To be called a middle peasant meant to receive nothing. Only those classed as poor peasants could expect to gain. Therefore, every family wanted to be classed as poor, and every family head, no matter how poor, tried to minimize what his family had possessed prior to liberation and deprecate what the family had received since.

For the minority at the upper end of the scale, downgrading was even more vital. All the prosperous peasants were fearful lest they be shoved over the line into the rich-peasant category and lose out. Even the middle peasant category included an upper group, the well-to-do, who could legitimately be asked to give up something. Those who feared that they owned enough to be called well to do wanted no part of any such condition and fought hard to convince their neighbors that they really had no surplus, that they were simply average middle peasants.

Since everyone wanted to be downgraded, since "poverty was best," I expected the final result of the classification to be a general shift downward. But this was not the case, and the reason for it was quite simple. The preliminary classification was undertaken by a group of families already designated by the work team as poor. It was in their interest to place others in higher brackets for two obvious reasons -in the first place, unless some families were classed as landlords, rich peasants, or well-to-do middle" peasants there would be no property to distribute; in the second place, if there were large numbers of families classified as poor, whatever "struggle fruits" materialized would have to be spread thin. Clearly the fewer families there were on the sharing end, the more each family would be likely to get.

The two contradictory trends, the desire on the part of all those being classed to be downgraded, and the desire on the part of those doing the classing to upgrade everyone else, tended to cancel each other out. In the course of the reports and appraisals the true situation of each family tended to be revealed.

For this happy result, credit must also be given to the method of discussion employed, a method that enabled every individual to talk over each case. This method was known as *ke ts'ao*, a word that literally means "ferment" and finds its American equivalent in the "buzz session." After each family presented its report, the chairman called out "*ke ts'ao, ke ts'ao.*" Then all those who were sitting together in their natural clusters formed as people came to the meeting fell to discussing the case. They continued to discuss it until they more or less agreed. As an agreement was reached in various parts of the room, the hum of voices gradually died down. Then the chairman called out, "*Pao kao, pao kao!*" (report, report!).

A spokesman for each group, designated on the spur of the moment by those who sat around him, then expressed the consensus arrived at by his companions in the course of their "ferment." If the opinions of the scattered groups did not coincide, the chairman tried to clarify the differences, review the facts in the case, and ask the family under consideration to report in greater detail. Then he called for another *ke ts'ao* and repeated the process until a real sense-of-the-meeting was reached. No votes were taken. To decide such matters by a vote meant to impose the will of the majority on the will of the minority with all the hard feeling that such an imposition was sure to cause. Objectively, the work team felt, any family must stand somewhere in the scale. A real understanding of the family's condition should enable the peasant judges to place the family in its proper niche. To vote meant to admit defeat, to make a subjective rather than an objective decision. When no sense-of-the-meeting could be reached, the cadres advised putting off the classification until further study of the standards and further investigation of the facts clarified the whole picture.

*[The next excerpt describes the collective evaluation of the Party members by a mass meeting (the gate) Note how the opinions of experienced workers are given more weight than those of others and how collective evaluation can silence unfair criticism.]*

That the Party members and village cadres had made many mistakes and committed a number of serious crimes was confirmed by the meetings at the gate. But that these people took all the good things for themselves and let the poor peasants *fan* an empty *shen*, as we had been hearing ever since we arrived in the village, proved to be an exaggeration. Another six Communists passed the gate in the next few days, and none of them had misappropriated anything worth worrying about.

One of these was Hu Hsueh-chen, suspended head of the Women's Association. We had heard, mostly from Old Lady Wang, that Hu was a tyrant, that she oppressed everyone and that she took piles of valuable clothes and ornaments while others got only rags. But

when it came time for the women's leader to go before the gate, people had no important grievances against her.

In the preparatory meeting held the night before, only Pao-ch'uan's mother spoke up. "She forced our small group to make shoes. Twelve of us had to make six pairs. It wasn't fair."

The handsome widow was quickly silenced. "To make shoes was our duty. If she forced you to make more, it was only because she wished to fulfill the quota. It had nothing to do with her private interest."

"As soon as I open my mouth, you cover it, complained Pao-ch'uan's mother. "I'll not criticize others again."

But no one sympathized with her.

"Hu Hsueh-chen's attitude is very good. She is gentle and modest," said T'ai-shan's mother. The others agreed.

The secretary of the branch, Hsin-fa, certainly the most important Communist in the village, also passed easily. The fact that he had never been a leading cadre in the village administration helped. Everyone seemed to like him and only criticized the fact that he was too easy-going. They called him a *lahaojen*, or "good old fellow," meaning someone who wanted to get along with everyone and have pleasant relations all around. This was a serious fault for a Communist and particularly the leader of the local branch, but at that moment the peasants had their eyes on more concrete matters and so were lenient with him.

How strict the delegates could be where property was concerned was revealed when they got around to Tsz'ai-yuan, the village storekeeper, a man whose popularity was legendary. They forgave him a fairly notorious record as a ladies' man when he said, "I didn't force anybody, they were all willing." Considering his good looks, his charm, and his prestige as a local man with the longest Eighth Route Army [a main unit of the Chinese Red Army] record, no one had any reason to doubt his word. They criticized him sharply, however, for smashing the big mirror that his brother Fu-yuan lent him for his wedding but would not let him have as part of his share of the "fruits." They criticized him even more sharply for bringing home from the front eight rounds of captured ammunition and then selling them for cash. They made him promise to turn over the proceeds to the government.

As a wounded soldier, Ts'ai-yuan was entitled to free help in the fields, a privilege that he had taken full advantage of in the past. But by now his wound had healed. He was able to do a man's work. He was, therefore, asked to pay for whatever help he might need in the future. This he also agreed to.

The strictness shown by the delegates in the above matters was balanced by their generosity when it came to an expensive quilt that Ts'ai-yuan offered to give up because it had not been allocated to him by any committee. They told him to keep the quilt as a token of their gratitude for the services he had rendered in the war.

*[The following excerpt shows how leadership by the Communist Party allowed the workers to take control over society -- to work for the common good, not for individual self-interest. Without that leadership, there could be no struggle for improvement. This leadership is communist democracy.]*

Hou's report covered what might be called the statistical and the tangible results of the Party purification. All the members of the team felt that the intangible results were far more important. They saw the gate as a turning point in the political *fanshen* of the people. It had already created a new climate of opinion, a new political atmosphere, a new relationship between the Communist Party and the people, and a new relationship between the people and the Border Region government.

These changes were profoundly democratic. They transformed "supervision by the people" from a slogan into a reality and effectively drew people, whom the land distribution had made equal economically, into activity that enabled them to project this equality into the political sphere.

The most important result of the whole campaign was certainly this drawing into meaningful action of hundreds of peasants who, because of various inhibitions and fears, had remained passive throughout the revolutionary years, or had lapsed back into passivity once the big struggle against the landlords had been victoriously concluded. The campaign to purify the party made clear to all participants that they people were sovereign, that they were responsible, and that they could and must decide their own future.

Almost equal in importance to the changes wrought by the campaign in the consciousness of the peasants were the changes it wrought in

**'Supervision by the people' was turned from a slogan into a reality.**

the consciousness of the Communists. In the agony of public self-examination, they were forced to face up to their weaknesses, to ask themselves fundamental questions concerning their character and their intentions, and to make important decisions about the future. Under fire for every lapse, every weakness, they began to catch a glimpse of the Revolution as the "hundred-year great task" that Chairman Mao had so often called it, rather than a great upheaval impetuously entered into and soon completed. "Service to the people" assumed new and demanding dimensions.

The enthusiasm engendered by the success of the gate was tempered by the realization that not all had gone well. The obvious disproportion between the fanfare of the build-up and the actual findings of the delegates was disturbing. One could hardly help wonder whether truth had been served as impartially as it should have been. Concentration on the weaknesses, errors, and crimes of the Party members had completely obscured any merits they might have had, any contributions they might have made to the *fanshen* movement. This followed inevitably from the thesis that the movement itself had been abortive. Yet if this were actually the case, what accounted for the great progressive change that had, in fact, taken place in the village? To insure the reality of supervision by the people, an atmosphere had been created in which only those who bowed their heads won approval. Those who had the courage to stand up for themselves and deny charges which they believed to be false had not been able to pass the gate. Yet possibly they had served truth better than those who had accepted all accusations, admitting full responsibility for crimes that they shared with others and agreed to give up property that was perhaps as rightfully theirs as anything that any family held. The disproportion between allegation and fact showed up sharply in this area.

## **The Great Leap Forward (China, 1957-1961)**

*- The Great Leap Forward, as seen in the writings of a North American resident of China who took part in it.*

*[There is abundant concrete evidence that the revolutionary masses, when given the chance, are eager to "work gratis for the benefit of society," are eager to develop "new social links, a new discipline of work in common." Much of this practical experience comes from China, home of a quarter of humanity, and once the scene of the most advanced revolutionary society. Between 1957 and 1961 a great nation-wide movement for increased social cooperation took place in China, resulting in the formation of communes and a leap into a "new discipline of work in common and a new national system of economy," which, of course, is condemned by the current capitalist leaders of China as a "leftist mistake."*

...across the country all sorts of people were turning out and getting things done, without waiting for money, special machinery or trained personnel. Between October 1957 and January 1958, for example, one hundred million co-op farmers pitched in and dug irrigation ditches and built check dams, converting nearly 26 million acres into irrigated land. In four months they brought more water to more land than their ancestors had been able to irrigate in the previous 2500 years.

I managed to get in on one of those projects when they built the Ming Tombs Reservoir. About twenty miles northwest of Peking was a wide bowl of arid mountains. When the rains came in July and August water rolled down the bare slopes in torrents, swamping some 50,000 acres in the lowland. It happened almost every year. Only the tombs of the Ming emperors, high and dry on the mountainsides, escaped damage...

When the people themselves came to power they decided to put an end to the annual scourge by building a dam across the mouth of the Tungshan Gorge. But this was a big project. Where was the labor to come from? And the steam shovels and bulldozers and dump trucks? Thousands of projects were in the course of construction in China, and all needed machinery. The dam was tentatively scheduled for...between 1963 and 1967.

Why wait? said the farmers in the neighborhood of the Ming Tombs. Since the job was too big for them to handle alone, they asked the various organizations in and around Peking whether they could help. The response was tremendous. Soon there were 120,000 working

right around the clock in three eight-hour shifts of 40,000 each. All the labor was voluntary, at no charge to the project. Each office or enterprise sent, in relays, groups of volunteers –not

**A joyous frenzy of energy and creativity -- the Great Leap Forward – was sweeping China.**

exceeding ten percent of their personnel -- for periods often days. During this time the volunteers continued to draw their regular salaries, while their jobs were taken over by the remaining ninety percent of their colleagues...Army men participated as part of their duty, at no extra compensation.

Ordinary tools -- mostly picks and shovels and carrying poles with baskets suspended at either end -- were either loaned or contributed. Electrical equipment had to be paid for, but its installation, including all the wiring, was done free by technicians in their spare time.

Of all the factors going into making the project a success, unquestionably the most vital was the enthusiasm of the volunteers. I did a stint with some people from my office, and it was an astonishing experience. Men and women who ordinarily did nothing more vigorous than tickling a typewriter or taking half a turn in a swivel chair were suddenly shoveling earth and toting gravel in baskets slung from shoulder poles, day and night, rain and shine. It was tough heavy work, but what with the singing and wisecracks and high spirits all around, you thought you were at some sort of jamboree rather than at the site of one of the largest earthen dams in the world.

Our cuisine consisted of gruel, bits of pickled vegetable, and coarse corn muffins, but we wolfed them down as if they were epicurean delights. We slept eight in a tent, with only pallets of pine branches between us and the ground, but our slumber was deep and dreamless. I heard many a white collar worker say he never realized manual labor was so difficult -- and so satisfactory. The camaraderie and drive knocked some of the stuffiness out of the stuffed shirts, and made everyone better at his job when he got back to his desk.

In less than five months the dam was finished. Fifty thousand acres of land that before were constantly hit by floods now came under controlled irrigation. Local grain output was raised by 27,000 tons a year. The value of the increase in the first year alone covered the entire cost of construction. The reservoir was also used for fish breeding and generating electricity. This "do-it-yourself-with-what-you've got" approach was spreading like wildfire all over China, always carefully watched and encouraged by the Communist Party. Someone would have what looked like a good idea. He would need time or money or conditions to try it out. These, the local Party organization would provide. If it worked, it would be tried on a somewhat larger scale. If that also succeeded, a complete report would be sent to the Central Committee of the Party in Peking. After investigation, the Central Committee might decide to introduce it nationally.

One of the most important developments in modern Chinese history -- the advent of the communes -- occurred in just this manner. It began in Honan Province early in 1958.

Honan for centuries had been tormented by floods and droughts. Determined to put an end to these disasters once and for all, the high-level cooperative farms to which most of the rural population belonged began to merge. This offered obvious advantages in dealing with the vagaries of a river. The co-ops on the lower reaches couldn't do much without the help of those on the upper. But they discovered other benefits as well. With manpower and capital pooled into large units, they were able to allocate their personnel more rationally and invest in costlier projects. They could make more appropriate use of their fields, according to soil conditions. The coal in the hills of one cooperative farm, for example, could be combined with the iron ore of another to make iron and manufacture farm implements.

Mergers proceeded apace. Under the guidance of the Honan provincial committee of the Communist Party several thousand more communes -- as people then began to call them -- were formed on an experimental basis. In addition to agriculture, the communes did small-scale manufacturing -- mainly of things they needed themselves -- set up their own supply and distribution units, ran their own schools and their own militias. They organized dining rooms, tailoring and mending groups, laundries, homes for the aged, medical dispensaries, maternity clinics, nurseries, kindergartens. Women were freed from much of their household drudgery and could take a fuller part in the work and administration.

A joyous frenzy of energy and creativity, soon to become known to the world as the Great Leap Forward, was sweeping China. Much

of it was unscientific and impractical...but...on balance, it was found that the gain exceeded the losses.

For the first time in history China was able comprehensively to control her floods, drain her fields and provide irrigation when needed. Thousands of miles of dikes, dams, canals and roads were built. New agricultural techniques were discovered and spread. Small homegrown mills and workshops sprouted like mushrooms. There were many inventions, some mechanization, even a little automation. In science and the arts there was a lively ferment of new methods, new ideas. China had made another qualitative leap...

About half of China's iron and steel production was coming from crude furnaces in the countryside, close to sources of iron and coal, and tended by people fresh from the farms with no previous experience.

The furnaces were miracles of ingenuity. Guided by only a few dozen persons with any technical training, the farm folk of Yuhsien County in two or three weeks learned to improvise furnaces and blowers that were cheap, quickly built -- and that made iron.

...a lot of the iron had been quite good, and was turned into much-needed farm tools. Mass prospecting had unearthed a large number of previously undiscovered mines. More important, homemade iron and steel production had given millions a basic familiarity with tools and machinery, sadly lacking in a country which had just emerged from centuries of feudal backwardness. When small and medium iron and steel plants were subsequently set up all over the country these people were the reservoir of technical trainees...

Every school, every government office, had its backyard furnaces. Teachers, pupils, civil servants, took turns tending them.

Inefficient, yes, but exciting, stimulating. I doubt whether the iron turned out behind the Foreign Languages Press served any practical purpose. The cost of transporting coal and iron ore to the center of the nation's capital must have exceeded the value of the steel we produced. But the value to intellectuals rising from their swivel chairs and sweating beside a blast furnace they had built themselves, carbon smudges on their noses, was incalculable. They were identifying, for the first time, physically and directly, with industrial production. They weren't just talking and writing about things -- they were doing them. It was very satisfying.

The atmosphere was positively festive. There was a great feeling of togetherness. "Me" and "mine" tended to give way to "us" and "ours."

## **Colonia Ruben Jaramillo -- (México,1973)**

*- Squatters' movements in Mexico in recent years set up autonomous villages on unused land, governing themselves and defending themselves from the army and police. This is part of the story of one of these villages. Although it was repressed by the state power of the bosses after months of struggle, there is much we can learn from it for the future.*

In Mexico, as in other capitalist countries, one of the innumerable unsolved problems is the lack of housing for the people.

This is the main reason why, on March 31, 1973, six determined men, heads of families, took possession of some vacant lots located some 5 kilometers from Cuernavaca in an urban development tract that had been abandoned about 15 years before.

The forces of repression responded without delay. The police immediately arrived to evict them. But the resistance of the new arrivals on the land prevented the police from carrying out their aims. Despite their initial failure, the police did not give up. In the following days they came back with more patrol cars, but they were repulsed again. Then they changed tactics.

Public officials arrived to try to bribe the settlers, offering them money in exchange for leaving the land they had seized. But this, too, failed. They offered other places to live if the families would abandon the occupied land. This also failed.

Not succeeding with intimidation as they wished, they threatened violent evictions if the 'settlers did not leave willingly.

Still the new arrivals did not leave. Subsequently, the newspapers campaigned against the settlers, branding them as criminals, guerrillas and agitators, etc. But these attacks could not alter the resolve of the harassed families. So the authorities, principally the State government, began to worry seriously about the problem.

Meanwhile, the new residents were wasting no time. They were aware of the critical housing situation for thousands of people who, like themselves, had no roof they could call home, and were forced to pay exorbitant rents to voracious landlords. They issued a call, inviting the homeless to join them and confront the police attacks to which they were being subjected.

The call was well received. By the end of the first week, the original six families had grown to fifty; within a month there were six hundred. The number of settlers continued to grow, resulting soon in a considerable force with which to face down the government and police of their "property," where they intended to build their homes and to have something to leave for their children. Each household was provided a 2100 sq. ft. lot (about one-twentieth of an acre).

For the government, the situation had become alarming. Word reached it that the population of the village already exceeded 15,000; under these conditions, it was becoming increasingly difficult to evict them, so the authorities began to think of taking more drastic measures.

As soon as the number of settlers began to grow, it was decided in a general assembly to give the village a name that would identify its spirit of struggle and combativeness with the cause of the poor and the destitute. The name of Ruben Jaramillo was selected. He was a peasant leader, treacherously assassinated, along with his wife and young children, by the Mexican government immediately after the president had "convinced" him to rely on the government for solutions. As proof of his "good intentions" President Lopez Mateos embraced Ruben Jaramillo to symbolize his loyalty to their pact. A week later Ruben Jaramillo and his family were shot dead -as later revealed, "on higher orders."

## **HOW RUBEN JARAMILLO'S PEOPLE GOVERNED THEMSELVES**

In the village, the people of Ruben Jaramillo inaugurated a new system of social life, which made them very happy because they were really in command.

The highest authority was the General Assembly, which met every weekend. Next in rank was the Struggle Committee, whose president was one of the original six settlers. He was well known to all and loved and esteemed for his candor and warmth toward all his comrades. His name was Florencio Medrano, and he was called "El Guero" -- the blond one. Then came the corps of Block Delegates, freely elected by the residents of each block. There were more than fifty of them, and they met with the Struggle Committee twice a week to discuss the order of priorities of the various tasks to be done. Each delegate in turn convened a Block Assembly to present the plans with a view to improving, rejecting or approving them.

The settlers always expressed their point of view, made suggestions and constructive criticisms, constantly seeking ways to make further advances. Sometimes a member of the Struggle Committee, or the president, "El Guero" Medrano, would attend the Block Assembly meetings. These had two purposes: suggestions and criticisms from the settlers to their representatives and reports from the representatives to the people. The meetings were held once a week in the afternoons, when the villagers returned from their regular jobs in Cuernavaca or nearby places.

The people had the right to recall any of their representatives at any time, whether members of the Struggle Committee or Delegates. Among the latter there were more changes, because some who were elected tried to take personal advantage of their posts, rather

**Collective work to build the village was the spirit of Ruben Jaramillo; most wonderful were the Collective Sundays.**

than work for the collective good as everyone desired.

## **WORKING COLLECTIVELY TO BUILD RUBEN JARAMILLO**

Working collectively to improve the village was the spirit of Ruben Jaramillo. Most wonderful, and most characteristic of Ruben Jaramillo, were the "Collective Sundays."

When the settlement was first getting started, all the "houses" consisted of no more than a blanket, a bedsheet or a serape, tied with ropes to a tree or to stakes driven into the ground. Even the Control Office was made up of a canvas which covered part of the roof and the four sides, leaving gaping holes near the floor and at the corners, through which the wind would blow, as well as the rain, which seemed to be helping those who wanted to evict the settlers.

Since everyone was suffering the same inclement weather, the same harassment and threats, they decided that all should pitch in to help each other out. They started out by improving and shaping up their homes, some built of straw, others of tarred cardboard and others yet of pieces of lumber discarded by the factories. Next, they turned to the streets, to trace them out and open them where there were none, or to level out and smooth down the terrain where it was very uneven and rocky. Brigades were formed. With machetes, spades, hoes and pickaxes they quickly finished the job, proving at each step that in unity there is strength.

The Colonia Ruben Jaramillo was divided by a ravine into two sections. To the east was the area where the developers had marked off lots and laid out streets. This the settlers called Los Pinos, for a big stand of pines near the entrance. To the west lay the undeveloped area, covered with "nopales," a type of cactus, and called La Nopalera. During the rainy season the stream that flowed through the ravine grew considerably, and the settlers decided to build a ford so that people could cross easily. Using pipes left over from the original construction, heavy ropes and crowbars, they quickly completed the work. However, as it was not fortified with cement, it didn't stand up well, and three weeks later it washed away.

Immediately, the Colonos (settlers) set out to build a better one. One Colono from each block contributed a full day's work. In twelve days the work was done.

In the Colonia stood a two-story building, originally planned as the "club" of the luxury development. It was surrounded by a chain-link fence and a big iron grating at the entrance.

When the governor saw that the settlers were determine not leave the land, and that their numbers were increasing day by day, he decided to at least save his club. So he sent some policemen to guard the building. When the settlers saw the cops coming, they invited them to join them, because the settlers were prepared to take back the building by any means necessary. But the policemen chose instead to flee in the middle of the night and the settlers then seized the site, deciding to use it as the headquarters of the Struggle Committee.

The building also served as a refuge against the rain for those whose houses weren't finished, or leaked. It became the House of the People -- home to the Struggle Committee, a medical clinic with nominal fees, and an elementary school with classes based on new teaching methods that enabled the students to advance rapidly. When a sick person had to go to the hospital in Cuernavaca, the loudspeaker would call for a volunteer to drive him. Once a car on such a mission was rammed in a traffic accident in the city, and the police falsely blamed the driver from Ruben Jaramillo and jailed him.

The response of the settlers was immediate. The following day a great number of them arrived at the place where their comrade was being held and began to chant their demand that he be set free. Some policemen with heavy weapons came out and threatened them. They were not intimidated and stood their ground. Eventually the police were forced to back down and release the settler.

The governor of the State, Felipe Rivera Crespo, was very worried about what was happening at Ruben Jaramillo, so he decided to pay an official visit to the Colonia, accompanied by some of his collaborators. He was hoping to win everybody's confidence and deceive them with his usual promises. He promised so many improvements that the settlers got tired of listening and started to boo and jeer, especially when he promised to build a subway system for them. No one swallowed his tale and he was forced to leave with his tail hanging between his legs.

On another occasion, the governor tried to enter incognito. He got past the first guardhouse, but he was soon recognized, and the alarm was sounded. Settlers poured out from all sides and surrounded his car. He was directed to the office of the committee and ordered to explain before all the purpose of his visit. Obviously quaking, he went with them, telling them they should not be rude to him. Stuttering and stammering, he then proposed and drafted a pact, which he was forced to sign in everybody's presence, agreeing that the Colonos could stay on the land and that the ten pesos per square meter that he had intended to charge everyone could be used instead by the committee to install drinking water, electric power, drainage or paved sidewalks. After that he never showed up again at Ruben Jaramillo, officially or in disguise.



Nor were the concerns of the residents of Ruben Jaramillo limited to their own village. When workers of the Nissan-Datsun factory nearby demonstrated to protest the company's failure to comply with the profit-sharing law, a big contingent of Colonos joined them. When these same workers, along with several other unions, demonstrated against the Mexican Institute of Social Security, the Colonos also participated. Similarly there were demonstrations by the settlers themselves, demanding that the governor fulfill his agreement to install water and electricity. One demonstration that left its mark was called to protest the proliferation of bars, prostitution and the sale of alcoholic beverages. None of these evils was permitted in Ruben Jaramillo.