

NOTES

*on the class struggle
and communist practice*

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Notes: On the Class Struggle and Communist Practice is the activists' bulletin of the Line of March political organization. Its focus is political analysis of the class struggle. *Notes* will contribute to the further development and elaboration of the United Front Against War and Racism strategy which informs the work of Line of March. The summation of communists' experience in the various mass movements will help train activists as organizers, agitators and propagandists, enhancing their ability to intervene in the people's movement with an advanced perspective. *Notes* will also provide an ongoing forum to assess the different left and communist forces in the U.S. and help chart the path to stronger unity among them. Finally, *Notes* will foster democratic discussion and debate within the communist movement, setting one of the key institutions of a Leninist formation in place.

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Women's Liberation and the Worldwide Struggle Against Imperialism

by the National Executive Committee of the Alliance Against Women's Oppression

A vital weapon in the fight for an internationalist outlook in the U.S. women's movement is a materialist explanation of why the fight for women's rights takes different forms in countries with different social systems and different levels of socio-economic development. The following paper is a contribution toward elaborating such an analysis. It is an expanded version of a working paper first discussed at the second national congress of the Alliance Against Women's Oppression (AAWO) in January, 1986.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to clarify and refine our framework for analyzing the international struggle against women's oppression. We operate from the assumption that the forward motion of women's liberation is inextricably linked to the international struggle against imperialism.

Especially since the 1960s, international working class forces have devoted more attention to the integration of women into the revolutionary process. And women have taken up major organizing and leadership responsibilities in the mass struggles for national liberation, peace, justice and socialism. Given the role played by the United States as the leader of the imperialist system worldwide, building solidarity with our international sisters is central to forging the working class core of the U.S. women's movement and the broader united front.

One of the obstacles to building that solidarity is the widespread notion in the U.S. women's movement that the fight for women's liberation in other coun-

tries, if it is being seriously waged, must take the same form and approach as the struggle here. This is a non-materialist and objectively national chauvinist viewpoint, which left forces in the women's movement must learn to combat in an effective manner. For this we must develop and utilize a scientific analysis, thus laying the foundation for durable bonds between the women's movement in the U.S. and our sisters around the world.

For our own organization, the struggle for a broader theoretical understanding of women's conditions and struggles internationally grows out of our history and practical work. Much of our particular political development has come as a result of lessons learned in the course of solidarity work with women active in national liberation movements in Vietnam, Southern Africa, Cuba, and more recently Palestine, Lebanon and Central America. Participation in the Nairobi Forum '85 accompanying the end of the United Nations Decade for Women gave us an even broader appreciation of the wide range of issues, conditions, priorities and political perspectives among the women of the world. With this experience shaping our views and with a long future of international solidarity work ahead of us, we will attempt here to elaborate the main features of our framework on the international struggle against women's oppression.

To do so, the first section of this paper briefly reviews our basic perspective concerning the material basis of women's oppression. The next three sections analyze the particular conditions and struggles of women in the developing countries, the advanced capitalist countries and the socialist countries respectively. We end with a brief conclusion summarizing the paper's main points.

I. The Material Basis of Women's Oppression

Women's oppression is a general, all-sided social relation in which women as a group are discriminated against relative to men. Thus, women share a common condition of oppression whose main material expressions are the discriminatory way in which they are integrated into social production and the disproportionate burden women bear in childrearing and family maintenance. As such, women's oppression is a distinct form of oppression that cannot be simply reduced to class exploitation alone. At the same time, there is an inextricable connection between women's status in any society and the class formation of that society.

We recognize the contributions made by many feminists in research and organizing work against women's oppression. Feminists have helped force the broader progressive movements to take women's liberation seriously. But we disagree with feminism as a distinct world outlook, theory and political strategy whose fundamental analysis of women's oppression is based on the concept of "patriarchy." Feminist theory defines patriarchy as an all-sided system of male domination, which is reproduced through the sexual division of labor and patriarchal ideology. Patriarchy is seen as creating cross-class unity between men in power over women and cross-class unity among women as the oppressed. To varying degrees class differences between women are acknowledged by feminists, but emphasis is placed on women's common oppression under patriarchy. Patriarchy is treated as co-equal or even the fundamental precursor and determinant of the system of class exploitation. Overthrow of the class system is seen as having no qualitative impact on the destruction of the patriarchal system.

These theoretical propositions lead some feminists to treat socialist governments, national liberation movements and imperialist regimes equally as male patriarchal power structures antagonistic to women's interests. Feminist political strategy, therefore, sees the cross-class autonomous women's movement as the strategic vehicle for women's liberation. It urges autonomy of women from "patriarchal influences," including autonomy from organized national liberation movements and working class political parties.

In contrast to feminist theory, the AAWO's analysis sees women's condition as fundamentally determined by the class system. Class shapes women's oppression at two levels. First, women's oppression is determined by the development of the mode of production; and second, women are divided into

different classes.

Women's oppression is framed by the mode of production of a given society, that is, by the level of development of a society's forces of production and the relations of production which dominate that society. "Forces of production" refers to the tools and means to produce the things necessary for human survival, people's level of labor technique and scientific knowledge. "Relations of production" refers to the relations that develop between people in the process of social production, exchange and distribution of material wealth, especially the property relations. The lower the level of development of the forces of production and the less understanding people have of the natural world, the more women are at the mercy of nature, their lives dictated by constant pregnancy, laborious and time-consuming childrearing and family maintenance tasks, and a difficult struggle to meet basic nutrition and health needs. Development of the productive forces sets the basis to do away with the material basis of women's oppression. But the social relations of production, in particular the property relations, determine whether the class holding power has an interest in women's oppression or in women's liberation.

Women's oppression also intersects with class in that, while all women are affected by the social dynamic of male supremacy/female subordination, women do not constitute a distinct class. Women are divided into all the various classes and strata of classes in roughly the same proportions as men. Also, because the relation between women and men often takes the form of an intimate/personal/familial relation, women and men tend to share the same material circumstances and class realities. This contrasts with the social separation that characterizes relations between different classes (and, in capitalist societies, different racial and nationality groupings as well). Women's class membership is thus determined not solely by their direct relationship to social production but also by the household unit of which they are a part. Consequently women's oppression takes the form of a special oppression within each social class—it does not determine one's class position altogether. Because of class divisions between women, upper class women are shielded from the most severe forms of women's oppression. Women of the laboring classes suffer the most brutal combination of sex, race, national and class oppression.

Because women's oppression is determined by class, in order to analyze women's status internationally we must look at how women's oppression is shaped by the worldwide system of imperialism. At the most general level, this means looking at differences in the conditions of women in the developing

countries, the advanced capitalist (imperialist) countries and in the socialist countries. These socio-economic groupings, of course, are not homogeneous. Each contains a tremendous variety of class formations, histories, political systems and cultures. And even within a given country, there are particular phenomena in need of analysis and political program, such as the specific conditions facing many indigenous peoples. Still, as broad categories they are quite useful for analyzing the general class conditions which determine the status of women. The level of development of the productive forces and the state of class relations is qualitatively different between each of these three groups. These differences give rise to differences in how women's oppression operates, and consequently, in the development of strategy for the struggle against women's oppression.

In the sections that follow we examine each of these groupings in turn. Each section provides an overview of the category as a whole, describes women's status within the countries of that grouping, and discusses the strategic implications for the struggle against women's oppression.

II. WOMEN IN DEVELOPING NATIONS

A. Capitalist "Development" in Africa, Asia and Latin America

In the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America that are still under the grip of Western imperialism, neither the problem of developing the productive forces to a level that overcomes scarcity nor the problem of eliminating exploitative social relations has been resolved. Rather, dependent capitalism continues to shape the lives of women in the developing nations.

Imperialist penetration distorts the economies of the developing countries. Subsistence agriculture and traditional handicraft production are destroyed in favor of land grabbing, cash crop production and plunder of natural resources. Production activities are determined by the imperialist division of labor between exploiter and exploited nations. The peasantry is continually displaced, and a transient agricultural working class emerges whose fortunes are tied to the ups and downs of the harvest and the prices for agricultural products on the world market. Urbanization increases because of the impoverishment of the countryside. Multinational corporations invest in areas where starvation wages can be paid with a minimum of government regulation.

Such "economic development" and "modernization"—under the terms of Western imperialism—do not bring about economic strength and independence.

Especially over the last two decades much of the economic surplus of the developing nations has been skimmed off by the imperialists in the form of interest payments on loans. Western lenders are pressuring debtor nation governments to increase the exploitation of their people to pay the interest. For example, 52% of Argentina's export income is used to pay interest on the foreign debt; so is 57% of Bolivia's and 36.5% of Mexico's. In 1983 and 1984, the net profits drawn from Latin America by means of interest payments alone totaled \$56.7 billion. The imperialist powers then use resources stolen from the Third World to expand their own military-industrial complex, meanwhile pushing for protectionist legislation to curtail imports from the same Third World countries. (See Fidel Castro's article *The World Economic and Social Crisis: Its Impact on the Underdeveloped Countries* for a vivid analysis of the current plight of developing countries.) Non-aligned nations are banding together to jointly address the debt crisis, to press for a New International Economic Order, and to reverse the historic plundering and exploitation of their resources and people by the imperialist powers.

B. Neo-colonialism Intensifies the Exploitation of Women

The distorted development of the productive forces, the weak economic base, and political systems dominated by comprador bourgeois, militarist and semi-feudal elements subservient to imperialism determine the lives of women in the developing countries. Rural women often have many children, due to lack of access to birth control, the need for more working hands on the land to ensure family survival, and to counteract high rates of infant mortality. According to reports prepared by the United Nations during the Decade for Women, two-thirds of the world's women have no access to contraception. More than half receive no trained assistance during pregnancy and childbirth. The low level of development of productive forces also means that work in the home is much more difficult and time consuming in the developing world than in the advanced capitalist countries. Women have to do more extensive work to obtain, store and prepare food, to make clothing materials, household implements and medicines and to procure water and fuel.

On top of the burdens shouldered by women in the home, more and more poor women in the developing countries must also work outside the home to bring in income for their families. There has been a rise in female-headed households among poor families worldwide due to high unemployment, military conscription and political repression of men. One-third of

all families in the world are now headed by women. In many societies women have always been the main workers in subsistence agriculture. In the developing world women shoulder more than half of all food production. In Africa women do 60% to 80% of all the agricultural work and 100% of all food processing. More and more women and children also work as seasonal farm hands, often earning less than half the wages of male workers. Working as market vendors has also been an area of marginal economic activity open to women. Many young women from poor families migrate to the city to work as domestics in the homes of upper class families for low wages and long hours, sending what little can be saved back home.

Increasingly young women are drawn from the countryside to work on assembly lines for multinational corporations. They work in the textile and garment industries, electronics, food processing, canning and light manufacturing. Often this work takes place in "free trade zones" where working conditions are especially hazardous to women's health but union organizing is forbidden by the government. Expansion of what has been dubbed the "global assembly-line" of women workers is particularly prevalent in Southeast Asia, the Philippines, South Korea, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Haiti and throughout Central America and the Caribbean. Between 75% and 90% of those working for dirt cheap wages in these zones are women. Multinational corporations openly boast that women are more suitable for long monotonous work, have finer manual dexterity and are less likely to speak up for their rights than men. But women in the developing countries often have no choice but to work under dangerous and oppressive conditions given high levels of poverty and male joblessness.

C. Religious, Militarist and Political Repression of Women

Women's status in the developing countries is also shaped by a wide variety of social, political, governmental and cultural systems. Especially where feudal and clerical/religious forces form part of the ruling class coalition and the separation between church and state is blurred, women's subjugation is very severe. Women are often defined as the wards of fathers, husbands and sons. They are denied independent legal status in marriage, divorce, authority in family decisions, private ownership and rights in courts of law. At Forum '85 in Nairobi, for example, Arab women talked about the oppressive consequences of the Islamic fundamentalist backlash on women in Iran, Lebanon and Pakistan. They drew similarities with Israeli religious exclusivity and with the New

Right Christian fundamentalist views of women, sexuality and the family in the U.S. Indian women exposed the problem of violence against women perpetuated by the dowry system, whereby women are harassed, beaten and even burned to death by the husband and his family in order to extract more dowry from her family so that the husband can marry another woman to get more dowry.

Militarism, war and political repression also intensify homelessness, sexual exploitation, rape, torture and other forms of violence against women. Women, children and the elderly disproportionately fill the refugee camps in El Salvador, Honduras, Lebanon and the West Bank as well as the bantustans of South Africa and Namibia. As mothers and wives many women have been politicized by the imprisonment, torture and disappearance of sons, daughters and husbands by right-wing military dictatorships. Women play a leading role in organizations demanding the release of political prisoners and the restoration of human rights. At the risk of their lives, Mothers and Families of the Disappeared organizations are central to the anti-fascist movements in Chile, Argentina, El Salvador and Guatemala.

Militarism heightens the sexual exploitation of women. Sex exploitation of Asian women grew during the Korean and Vietnam wars. Prostitution zones were established and expanded into so-called "Rest and Recreation" centers, especially in South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, Hong Kong and Okinawa. In Saigon before liberation there were 400,000 prostitutes, including many young girl-children who were selling their bodies for a few dollars a night. U.S. soldiers were literally trained to search out and destroy Vietnamese peasants by day and seek comfort in the arms and bodies of Vietnamese women by night. There are still large U.S. military bases in the Philippines, South Korea, Thailand and Okinawa. Whole towns have become dependent on prostitution for economic survival. Dependent governments with massive foreign debts developed "sex tourism" as a way to generate foreign currency. Women are now routinely offered as part of tour packages to U.S., Japanese and West European businessmen and military personnel.

D. Strategies and Movements for Women's Liberation in the Developing World

The nakedness of imperialist domination and class exploitation in the developing countries militates against tendencies to separate the analysis of women's oppression from the overall class reality. It is nearly impossible to imagine the masses of indigenous, peasant and working class women liberating

themselves from poverty, hunger, exploitation, high infant and maternal mortality, illiteracy, sexual abuse and political repression without national liberation from imperialism and economic development backed up by people's power. Because of the close intersection between the problems of national, class and women's oppression in the developing world, there is a weaker material basis for a significant feminist movement to evolve autonomous from the broader liberation movements.

Many Western feminists, seeking to impose their own views and prejudices on this reality, have warned women in the developing world not to allow discussion of women's issues to be dominated by "male political agendas." U.S. liberal feminists Betty Friedan and Bella Abzug, for example, admonished against mixing women's issues and "male" politics going into the Nairobi conference. This apprehension is shared by radical feminist Robin Morgan, editor of *Sisterhood is Global*, an anthology of writings by women from different countries who hold varying political perspectives. This anthology is being used as a resource book for women interested in learning about global feminism, a movement initiated by radical feminists which seeks to promote an internationalist perspective and network among women. Morgan writes that "... women have invested entire lifetimes in the hope that national liberation would also free us as full human beings, almost inevitably to find ourselves *de jure* or *de facto* ignored, trivialized, or abandoned by the new group of men in power."

Such views, not surprisingly, have been angrily rejected—as at Nairobi—by spokeswomen for the masses of women in the developing countries. They insist that the women of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East cannot separate women's battle for equality from the fight against imperialism, neo-colonialism and racism.

Feminism has found an audience, however, in several of the developing countries. The category of developing countries includes an extremely broad range of socio-economic levels, from very poor countries like Mali or Senegal to countries with a rapidly expanding working class and a big national bourgeoisie such as Argentina, Chile, South Korea and Egypt. In countries where capitalist development has been accelerated there is a stronger material basis for the development of separatist feminist currents mainly among petty bourgeois and bourgeois women and women from the intelligentsia. These currents critique women's oppression while simultaneously advocating autonomy from the national liberation and working class movements. This tendency is strengthened when, as is sometimes the case, its criticism of the broader left for neglecting defense of

women's rights is accurate.

Even where feminism has achieved some influence in the developing world, however, its specific politics reflect the harsh realities of living under imperialist domination. Feminists in developing countries tend to have stronger anti-imperialist politics and use the patriarchy analysis in a more restricted manner than Western feminists. They are also less prone to blur over class differences between women. This was evident in the exchange of views spurred by the U.N. Decade for Women, which in turn accelerated the interchange, cross-fertilization and networking between women activists of the developing world, feminist and not feminist.

As the struggle for national liberation and social transformation intensifies, political activism among women expands with it. Working class, peasant and indigenous women step forward and are integrated into the overall national democratic movement. Gains are greatest where anti-imperialist organizations sink roots among the most oppressed masses and take special political and organizational steps to unleash the power of women. Activating the most exploited women is integrally connected with the degree of fusion of the revolutionary front with the masses. This phenomena is not particularly surprising, since no other political force has the strategic interest in improving the lives of the most exploited women, the organizational capacity to empower these women, nor the political muscle to overturn the exploitative system as a whole.

Mass women's organizations as well as other mass organizations with a largely female membership play key parts in the national liberation movement. They organize around the most pressing issues impacting women's lives. They fight against political repression of family members, against rent and price increases, against forced relocation and military conscription of sons. They provide mutual support projects and networks among poor neighborhood women, and organize women's participation in open political protest as well as clandestine and military activity. A number of mass working class women's organizations fight for women's rights within the political program and priorities of the broader revolutionary front. Over the last 30 years, pivotal roles in their respective liberation struggles have been/are being played by the Women's Union associated with the National Liberation Front of Vietnam; the AMPRONAC/AMNLAE (Association of Nicaraguan Women "Luisa Amanda Espinosa") initiated by the Sandinista National Liberation Front in Nicaragua; the Salvadoran women's organizations affiliated with the FMLN/FDR; the Palestinian women's association

affiliated with the PLO, and the women's sections and associations of South Africa, Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. We can learn much from the history and work of these organizations, as they organize and represent the most oppressed women at a scale that is far more advanced than the women's movements in the advanced capitalist countries at this time.

III. Women in Advanced Capitalist Countries

In the advanced capitalist countries of Western Europe, Japan and the U.S., the main barrier to women's liberation does not lie in too low a level of the productive forces. Rather, the productive forces have become highly developed and provide the technical/material prerequisites for women to exercise control over their reproductive capacity, for social support of the family and for the widespread integration of women into the paid workforce on a non-discriminatory basis. But it is not in the interest of the monopoly capitalist class to promote equality for the masses of women. Hence a sharp political struggle culminating in the overthrow of capitalism is required to open the path to women's complete liberation. To illustrate this basic thesis, we will focus here on the conditions of women in the U.S., the advanced capitalist country with which we are most familiar.

A. Women's Integration into the Paid Workforce

U.S. women's relation to social production has qualitatively changed over the past 100 years. At the turn of the century, women in the lower strata of the working class made up the overwhelming bulk of those women who worked outside the home after marriage. Because of racial and national oppression, these women were largely Black, Latina and European immigrant women. When a woman worked after marriage it was usually a sign that the man in the household was not paid a "family wage." Lower strata families simply could not afford to have women stay at home despite the vast amount of work it took to clothe and feed a family in those days.

During the world wars, when the U.S. economy was booming and many men were at war, women of the more stable strata of the working class were discovered as a latent labor reserve. These women, along with Blacks who had migrated from the South, were pulled into the non-agricultural workforce. Since that time women's integration into the workforce has steadily increased.

The U.S. emerged from World War II as the leading imperialist power while Europe and Japan lay in ruins. Post-war reconstruction of the other capitalist powers was financed in such a way as to make them more dependent on the U.S. The rise of the U.S. as

the dominant imperialist power with the most privileged economic position was also accompanied by an expansion of the petty bourgeoisie and the U.S. labor aristocracy.

With the expansion of U.S. finance capital, new sectors of the economy also expanded, many of which came to rely heavily on underpaid female labor. Women workers now predominate in banking, insurance, sales, clerical work, the service sector—especially the health care and educational industries—and light manufacturing. The myth of women as "secondary wage earners" who can be paid half the wages of men and concentrated in sex-segregated occupations has been a great boon to U.S. monopoly capital. Small wonder that the Reagan administration opposes comparable worth, arguing that "it violates the American free enterprise system."

The female workforce is multi-racial, but there is definite job segregation along race and nationality lines between women. Whereas the sewing trades used to be filled with European immigrant women, especially young Jewish women, now the work is almost entirely carried out by older non-white, immigrant women, especially Puerto Rican, Mexican, Asian and Black women. Overall, the most tenuous, lowest paying occupations—in agriculture, canning, domestic labor, assembly line production and the bottom rungs of health care and educational institutions—are disproportionately filled by Black, Puerto Rican, Mexican, Caribbean and Asian immigrant women.

The concentration of women of color in the most unstable, oppressive jobs is a function of U.S. racism. Racism has historically concentrated the non-white section of the working masses at the very bottom. It has also become a feature of imperialism which internationalizes the labor force. Workers and professionals whose economic and political opportunities have been choked off in the neo-colonies migrate to the imperialist centers—Western Europe as well as the U.S.—in search of a better life. Although the standard of living is much higher in the imperialist countries, women's entry into the job market is often in the same occupations that had been exported to their native countries, e.g., garment and electronics work.

U.S. women's increased integration into social production has brought many changes in women's condition. The "good news" is that women have been drawn into a more direct relation with capital, not just mediated through men, whereby they are more directly exposed to broader economic, social and political vistas. Economic subordination to men in the family is undermined. This becomes the case not only for women of the lower strata of the working class, but also for women of the middle strata, the labor

aristocracy and the petty bourgeoisie.

The "bad news" is that women's integration into social production simultaneously reflects deeper exploitation of the working class. U.S. capitalism has set a new standard where it now takes two workers to maintain the standard of living of the stable strata of the working class where it only used to take one. The lower strata of the working class is edged out both in terms of sharper job competition and in terms of sinking further below any reasonable standard of living.

B. Changes in the Family, Work in the Home and Views of Sexuality

Women's increased economic independence has made it more possible to survive without men. Women can more easily get out of oppressive relationships, live with other women, or live by themselves. But because of women's low wage status, women utilize these options at high risk. The rise in female-headed households which are disproportionately poor is a by-product of both the greater potential for female economic independence and their vulnerability. Within the lower strata, family breakup is also a reflection of the unavailability of employment for lower strata males, non-white males in particular.

We do not subscribe to the analysis put forward by socialist feminists under the heading "the feminization of poverty" which asserts that "all women are just a husband away from poverty." This view trivializes major race and class differences between women and virtually ignores the harsh conditions faced by working class men, especially minorities. The family remains the economic unit of class membership and of consumption and women do not constitute a distinct class as the socialist feminist version of the "feminization of poverty" implies.

But it is true that the low wages of working class women and the rise in female headed households reflects new ways in which women's oppression intensifies exploitation and stratification within the working class. In 1980, 47.5% of all Black families were female-headed, 21.8% of Latino families and 14% of white families. Monopoly capitalism continues to narrow and pulverize working class families in the most brutal way. Low wages, family dissolution and high poverty and unemployment rates are most accelerated within the non-white section of the working class. Whereas 20 years ago 75% of Black men were employed, today some 50% are no longer in the workforce. Adding insult to injury, the Reagan administration has launched a typically racist attack on Black teenage females for supposedly having too many babies and on Black teenage males for allegedly being sexually irresponsible and prone to commit

crimes. Reagan's convenient solution is to cut any remaining social spending for female-headed households and to stiffen law enforcement.

The level of development of productive forces in the advanced capitalist countries accounts for the big difference in the domestic and family maintenance work done by women here versus that performed by our sisters in the developing world. The development of food and clothing production, of labor saving home appliances, of electrification, the development of water and sanitation systems, the public education system and health industry—all of which take place outside the home—is of major importance to women. But monopoly capitalism sets certain limits in subsidizing anything not profitable which can be left to individual women and families to deal with. For example, the U.S. and South Africa are the only advanced capitalist countries without a socialized health system. Even though well over half of all U.S. women work, childcare is not supported by the government either. The social wage—that portion of U.S. taxes that comes back to the working class in the form of basic social services—is increasingly cut in order to finance U.S. military, economic and political aggression around the world. The social wage is further parceled out unevenly. A disproportionate share goes to those sectors of the population (mainly white) with the most political clout and less to the lower strata, heavily colored and female. For example, during Reagan's first two years in office, 40% of the cutbacks in federal benefits programs were absorbed by families with incomes under \$10,000 per year, even though these families only account for 20% of the U.S. population.

Another aspect of the development of the productive forces for women has been the development of birth control. The birth rate has declined as the population became urbanized. Smaller families allow more flexibility for women. With birth control the separation between sexual activity and procreation, coupled with the promotion of individual freedom of expression under capitalism (as opposed to feudalism), has also meant more emphasis on sexuality and sexual expression. Intimate relations between people can be somewhat socially sanctioned distinct from parental and economic pressures about heterosexual marriage. Under advanced capitalism the movement of gays and lesbians develops as a distinct battle against discrimination and oppression, challenging traditional views of the "legitimate" and "natural" forms of sexuality and the family.

But since these changes take place under capitalism, women's access to birth control, health care and sex education is mediated by the sex, race, class and religious factors embedded in society. Sexual expres-

sion and the recognition of human sexuality is commercialized, purveyed by the mass media to sell everything from liquor to car tires and by a profitable pornography industry. Sexual objectification is used to further reinforce female subordination and male supremacy. Small wonder that in the U.S. women are raped at the rate of one every six minutes. The objective changes in women's economic and social roles is also countered by the neo-fascist backlash of the New Right that longs for the "good old days," when "father knew best, men were men and women were women."

C. Development of the Women's Movement

Within the advanced capitalist countries there is a much stronger material basis for a spontaneous women's movement to develop separate from the broader working class movement. The basis for the development of a separate women's movement grows out of many of the factors mentioned above, e.g., a trend towards the direct integration of the majority of working class and petty bourgeois women into social production, advances in reproductive technology to limit family size and reduction of backbreaking household chores. Women of all classes are spurred to activism as they experience the growing tension between advances in the forces of production that open up social and economic opportunities and unjust social relations that continue to hold them back. Women from the petty bourgeoisie and labor aristocracy, however, often experience women's oppression but not the harshest aspects of class and race oppression. These women are particularly bitter about the sexist barriers that prevent them from enjoying the same privileges as the men of their strata. They form the main social base of the distinctly feminist movement. In the U.S., for example, these women, overwhelmingly white, form the core base of the National Organization for Women (NOW), the major feminist group in the country.

In the U.S. there are three distinct trends in the feminist movement. The liberal feminist trend has the broadest recognition and influence. It is grounded in liberalism as a world view and reformism as a political strategy, working so that women can achieve full equality with men within the context of the capitalist system. Radical feminism, as its name implies, takes a more radical approach to women's liberation. Arising in the 1960s and '70s, it encouraged direct action of women for their liberation. Radical feminism produced a theoretical explanation of the all-sided system of oppression of women. The framework of patriarchy, the standpoint of biological determinism and the identification of all men as oppressors have

become the hallmarks of radical feminism. Socialist feminism emerged as a left critique of radical feminism. It critiqued radical feminism as biological determinist and Marxism as inherently sex-blind. The socialist feminist strategy for women's liberation is a distinct revolution to eliminate patriarchy and the sexual division of labor. The strategic vehicle of the anti-patriarchal revolution is not the working class, but the cross-class autonomous women's movement. Socialist feminism functions within the broader political trend of social democracy and also has influence among academic feminists.

Overall the development of a feminist trend in the imperialist countries is a positive, progressive phenomenon. The women's movement has won important legal, economic and political rights for women and put a dent in rampant sexist ideology. And the existence of the women's movement offers a new challenge to the working class movement: how to incorporate the struggle against women's oppression into the developing program of the united front and popular front, and how to work with a spontaneous movement that does not operate from a working class framework. The women's movement thus develops as a broad cross-class front which contains struggle between different class interests over program, leadership and direction. The class polarization in the U.S. women's movement is extremely immature at present and working class forces are a long way from being able to challenge the political and organizational hegemony of the petty bourgeois leadership.

Because of the predominance of petty bourgeois politics in the feminist movement, many working class forces have made the mistake of "writing off" the women's movement as hopelessly racist and anti-working class terrain. Often this goes hand in hand with theoretically and politically liquidating the distinct struggle against women's oppression. Other left tendencies, while attempting to work in the spontaneous women's movement, have conciliated its race and class biases. Neither approach will do. Working class forces must take part in the women's movement, struggling to develop a united front core centered around a clear anti-racist, internationalist and class conscious perspective. Women affiliated with the communist left can forge working unity with the most class conscious sisters from the radical and socialist feminist trends to contend with the liberal, bourgeois feminism which presently dominates the movement. As more and more of society's most oppressed women are drawn into the struggle on the basis of a program that places their interests central, a working class trend in the women's struggle linked to the broader working class front can develop.

Identification with the international struggle for peace is a particularly crucial element in the political maturation of the women's movement in the imperialist countries. Numerous women are already active around a number of peace-related issues. Opposition to nuclear war and the potential destruction of the human race unites a broad, cross-class spectrum of women, from liberal feminists to radical feminists to working class forces. Organizations such as the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and Women Strike for Peace have made and continue to make vital contributions to the fight for peace. Recently a wide spectrum of U.S. women came out in opposition to "Star Wars." They demanded that the Reagan administration demonstrate good faith in response to the Soviet moratorium on nuclear weapons testing.

The widely studied "gender gap" also reflects, in large measure, the relatively stronger sentiment for peace among women relative to men. During the 1980 presidential elections men favored Reagan over Jimmy Carter by 55% to 36%, women only by 47% to 45%. The perception of Reagan as more prone to militarism and war appeared to be the largest single factor causing this difference. Regarding the 1983 invasion of Grenada, 62% of the men polled by the White House supported it, while only 41% of the women did.

Still, the gender gap is not consistent, and its strength is far overshadowed by factors of class and race. During the 1984 presidential election the gender gap—once expected to reach 15%—almost completely disappeared. Women supported Reagan 57% to 43%, almost matching the male figure of 61% to 39%. This is compared to a vast racial gap where whites gave Reagan 66% to 34% support while Blacks were voting 90% to 10% *against* the President.

The radical feminist trend in the U.S. women's movement is very active around international and peace issues. Many radical feminists are working to develop a global feminist movement and radical feminists have participated in the three international conferences that took place during the U.N. Decade for Women (1975, 1980, 1985). They have played a particular role in raising consciousness around such issues as violence against women, sex tourism, prostitution, lesbian oppression, and the "global assembly-line." Radical feminists have also been active in solidarity work in support of national liberation struggles, organizing mass mobilizations of women against militarism, nuclear weapons and the Pentagon. They have been inspired in part by feminist action at the Greenham Common Peace Camp in Great Britain.

There is also an anti-imperialist section of the women's movement that has been politicized by the Vietnam War, the Cuban Revolution and national liberation struggles in Puerto Rico, Chile, Southern Africa, Central America and the Middle East. This segment is most active today in solidarity work with women in the national liberation movements. It overlaps with broader united front forces who connect growing U.S. militarism with increased racist and sexist attacks against workers, minorities, women and the poor domestically. A number of these women have been active in the Rainbow Coalition, calling for a more just foreign policy framed by peace, negotiation and cuts in Reagan's massive military budget.

IV. Women in Socialist Countries

A. Socialist Construction and New Social Relations

In the case of women in socialist countries, the overthrow of the exploiter class has set the qualitative basis to develop the productive forces under conditions that liberate women. During the national democratic stage of the revolution it is the worker-peasant alliance, and during the socialist stage it is the workers' state, that guides the development of the economy to serve the needs of the people and work to do away with class distinctions. The power of the workers' party, state apparatus and mass organizations are used to eradicate the material remnants of women's oppression and integrate women fully into the economic, political, social and cultural life of the country. These material steps are accompanied by an ongoing ideological struggle against sexist ideas that justify women's subordination.

Of course, the progress made in overcoming women's oppression under socialism must be evaluated in the context of each socialist country's overall level of development. There is an important distinction between countries with a low level of development of the forces of production just setting out on the path of socialist construction on the one hand and the developed socialist countries on the other. In countries of socialist orientation newly liberated from imperialism, the people are struggling to consolidate revolutionary power and build up the productive forces to overcome scarcity. Often they face the active hostility of imperialism, from economic blockades to contra wars, as in Nicaragua, Angola, Mozambique, Kampuchea and Vietnam. Economic scarcity impacts the pace of women's liberation in developing socialist countries and newly-liberated countries of socialist orientation. But even where conditions are most difficult, steps toward women's emancipation are incor-

porated in each aspect of economic development and social transformation.

Socialist construction is built on major reorganization of the economy under centralized guidance. Agricultural production is transformed, the backs of the landlords are broken and the peasants empowered, initially through land reform. Cooperatives are encouraged with technical assistance from the state and the bulk of produce marketed through the state to the rest of the working class. Large-scale production of agricultural crops is conducted in state-owned farms, with agricultural workers organized into unions and living conditions improved. The development of heavy industry is key to building the economic foundation. It is the basis to mechanize agriculture, to make the machinery for light industry to produce consumer goods, and to produce the military capacity needed for defense against imperialism. Investments are also made in light industry to raise the living standards of the masses and lighten family maintenance chores. Agricultural and industrial products are brought to the world capitalist market and to other socialist countries to obtain foreign currency to invest in economic growth and to obtain goods not produced in the country.

A portion of the economic surplus is also put into increasing the social wage of the working class, i.e., health, education, rent, cultural and recreational activities. At the triumph of the revolution, there is usually a big drop in rent, health care and educational expenses for the working class. Literacy, nutrition and public health levels rise. Over time, prices for food, clothing, and consumer goods go down. Another portion of the economic surplus goes toward material aid to other sections of the worldwide struggle against imperialism. The more developed socialist countries especially render considerable aid to other socialist and socialist-oriented countries, the developing world and the national liberation movements.

The training and organization of the working class to assume its role as the ruling class in the new society is a challenge at every level. The political organization of the masses runs through two intersecting lines: (1) the working class party and mass formations organized along sectoral lines, e.g., trade unions, women's, peasants', youth and students' organizations; and (2) the government apparatus of national legislative bodies, ministries and bureaus, down through regional, local and sometimes block-level administration. All these take part in meeting the needs of the population, with special attention to minority racial or national groupings and women.

B. Eliminating the Material Basis of Women's Oppression

In the socialist countries a high priority is put on eradication of the material aspects of women's oppression. Prime emphasis is placed on integrating women into social production on the basis of complete equality with men. Thus provisions are made for leaves—with full pay, benefits and one's job guaranteed—to give birth and raise small children. Other standard measures adopted by the socialist countries are equal pay for equal work; "affirmative action" in training, hiring and promotion of women in non-traditional employment; shorter working hours with full pay for women with three or more children; state subsidized childcare centers, and youth development and recreational centers. Where sex exploitation of women had reached staggering proportions, such as in Vietnam and Cuba, women's organizations also assist in education, job training, and adjustment of women who had been forced to work as prostitutes in the past.

Some of these measures intersect with women's domestic and family responsibilities. As the technical revolution proceeds and the social wage is expanded, women's work in the home is reduced via electrification and clean water distribution, the development of community laundries, kitchens, grocery pickup at the workplace and greater availability of household appliances.

C. Continuing the Ideological and Political Struggle Against Women's Oppression

As socialism develops, a new round of questions surface about marriage, divorce, family relations, sex roles and sexuality. Some pro-woman changes are debated and legislated early on in the revolutionary process, such as prohibition of the commercialization of women by the media, reform of divorce laws, etc. In Cuba a family code was debated and instituted several years ago to bring about more equality within the family. In some socialist countries there has been a rise in the divorce rate since its much easier to get married and get divorced than before. In the Soviet Union men must pay child support or be imprisoned; they do not pay alimony to women because women are generally working too.

Women in the socialist countries have noted the protracted character of the ideological struggle to transform sexist views that continue to impede the promotion of women at work and into leadership roles as well as the consolidation of a more equitable division of domestic and family responsibilities. Not only men, but also many women still believe that women are not as capable in many areas as men. As in

any broad social transformation, the leadership and cadre of the women's organizations—and the party and mass organizations overall—must assess which sectors of the population are most advanced in their views, which are the most backward, and how the advanced forces can win over the broad middle strata to adopt a more advanced perspective step by step. Mass ideological/political campaigns are conducted around legislation attempting to correct a problem through the women's organizations, mass media, debate and criticism. Not surprisingly, more rapid progress is made with young women and men than with the older generation.

The ideological struggle to change traditional sex roles and liberate women takes into account the specific historical and cultural formation of each society. For example, in Nicaragua the push by AMNLAE for women's right to abortion runs up against the Catholic tradition and hierarchy. In the Soviet Union there is a great emphasis on stabilizing the heterosexual family, in part because 20 million people, the majority of whom were men, were killed during the fight against fascism in World War II. Women were three-fourths of the country's workforce and many women lost their husbands, fathers and sons. The family unit may be reified as a result of the fact that the family had to be reconstructed along with the rest of the social fabric and economy which had been devastated by the war. Socialist countries also differ in their historical views and current policies towards homosexuality. Some continue to discriminate against gays and others—most notably the German Democratic Republic—have instituted a more progressive policy.

D. Mass Women's Organizations

In socialist countries women's issues are taken up through mass women's organizations as well as women's commissions, committees and bureaus in other mass organizations and the state apparatus. The character of the mass women's organizations transform after the triumph of the revolution. They become vehicles for organizing the majority of women in the society with the backing of the state and party. For example, the membership of the AMNLAE in Nicaragua has expanded to 70,000. By the time of the Fourth Congress of the Federation of Cuban Women, the membership had risen to 2,764,960, which is 83.5% of all Cuban women between 14 and 65 years of age. Within such large mass organizations there is a necessary distinction between cadre and membership. Attention is paid to identification of women with the greatest leadership potential, tasking them into positions of responsibility and providing intensive cadre training. In turn, cadre are responsible for

developing the appropriate educational, mobilization and work campaigns for organizing and influencing the masses of women.

When the working class is in power, the character of "women's work" is all-sided and intersects with the work of other mass organizations and government bodies. In that sense, the mass women's movements in the socialist and socialist-oriented countries are not autonomous, "feminist" formations. They are based on a class conscious outlook, situating the distinct fight for women's liberation in the content of advancing the entire society.

The women's organizations work closely with trade union organizations and labor ministries to integrate women into social production. They assist in guaranteeing women training and promotion opportunities and job benefits and they deal with occupational health and safety and the like. The mass women's organizations help organize women's participation in health, literacy and sanitation campaigns and in youth development and social work. The women's organizations help design and give input on the development and enforcement of pro-woman legislation. Leading members of the women's organization often sit on national, regional and local government bodies as well. For example, in the Soviet Union there are commissions on the status of women in the central committee of the trade unions and in the soviets, and the president of the Soviet Women's Committee is also a member of the presidium of the whole country.

In general the main objectives of the mass women's organizations are to both organize women and to make sure that women's issues are articulated and addressed in the broader society. In order to do this, women's issues must be taken up by all the organs of people's power. According to the Main Report of the 4th Congress of the Federation of Cuban Women:

"A thing so immense as socialism cannot be built without the support of the masses of women. On the one hand, women obtained their equal rights as a result of the fundamental social, economic, political and ideological changes that the Revolution introduced; on the other, the successes of the revolutionary transformations of society were largely made possible by women's active participation in them."

Women in the socialist and socialist-oriented countries also carry out their internationalist duty by contributing to their respective country's use of political, economic and military clout to block imperialism on all fronts. They make sacrifices in their standard of living, development and security in order to provide material and political assistance to the

liberation movements and developing nations. Women from the socialist camp work together with women in imperialist countries against nuclear war and militarism. Socialist women play a leading role in the Women's International Democratic Federation, which serves as an international network for peace, development and equality uniting women from working class women's organizations in the socialist countries, national liberation movements and imperialist countries.

V. Conclusion

Differences in the historical and material realities of women in the developing, imperialist and socialist countries give rise to distinct stages, strategies and political movements for women's liberation.

In the developing world, the masses of indigenous, peasant and working class women are engaged in a basic struggle for survival and to free themselves from imperialism and neo-colonialism.

In the imperialist countries, capitalism continues to transform the form and content of women's oppression by increasing the tension between the potential for women's liberation in the workplace, family and society vs, their continued oppression for the benefit of monopoly capitalism. At the same time, advanced capitalism creates the basis for the emergence of mass women's movements demanding equality. Although the women's movements in imperialist countries are still dominated by petty bourgeois leaderships and politics, the continued trend towards direct proletarianization of women also lays the basis for a stronger working class current to grow within those movements.

In the socialist countries, women are struggling to liberate themselves, often in the midst of scarcity and imperialist encirclement, in order to eradicate all material and ideological vestiges of oppression.

These general points provide the framework and starting point with which to study in more depth the specific conditions of the women of any particular country.

The proliferation of mass women's organizations, networks and activism have become a prominent feature of the movement for change in many countries. Women have become a force in the international arena in their own right. The United Nations Decade for Women highlighted, expressed and accelerated the development of an international women's movement for peace, equality and development. Because women's oppression is interwoven with and entrenched in the class system, women's liberation is central to the forward motion of the world revolutionary process.

We have sought in this paper to clarify differing conditions of women in different countries in order to advance the struggle for unity between women around the world. Our more particular purpose has been to better take up our solidarity responsibilities here in the U.S. As a working class organization, the Alliance Against Women's Oppression can appreciate the complexity of the struggles of our international sisters, free from much of the anti-male, anti-left, national chauvinist prejudices of Western feminist evaluators. At the same time, the AAWO is also interested in the work and development of the feminist movement because we recognize that this movement grows out of the material reality of the advanced capitalist countries, and because it is our responsibility to work together with progressive feminists to strengthen internationalism and build a working class-oriented, anti-racist core within the women's movement. While there is a lot of work ahead of us, we can learn from the lessons and experiences of our international sisters in our common struggle for women's liberation and class emancipation.

On Strikes

by V.I. Lenin

Strikes, according to V.I. Lenin, are "a school of war." The short analytic article in which this point is made—reprinted here—is quite timely reading today for our wing of the U.S. communist movement.

From the moment U.S. capital turned toward the policies of Reaganism at the end of the 1970s, a no-holds-barred offensive against workers' living standards and the trade union movement has been underway. Pressures have steadily mounted for wage concessions, two-tier contracts, take-aways in benefits, work rules and safety provisions. Outright union busting tactics have become commonplace.

While still uneven in scope and depth, a broad fightback against this anti-labor onslaught has begun to stir. Not surprisingly, militant use of the strike weapon is part and parcel of this resistance. As a result, strikes have moved more to the forefront among all the various economic and political measures workers utilize to conduct the class struggle. And with no sign that the employer/government anti-labor offensive is about to let up, we can assume that strikes are likely to play an even more prominent and significant role in the years ahead. In this sense, the demands and contours of the class struggle itself propel the communists to gain a sharper theoretical grasp of the nature of strikes and their political significance.

For the wing of the communist movement represented by the Line of March, however, there is an additional reason to study Lenin's comments on the role of strikes in the revolutionary struggle. Because of the specific polemics and ideological struggles which have framed our history and development, most of our theoretical work on strikes (and other aspects of the economic/trade union struggle) have emphasized their limitations relative to the task of forging revolutionary consciousness and communist organization among workers. Specifically, our initial consolidation as a Marxist-Leninist trend only

took place through a sharp struggle with a narrow, economist party building strategy that focused one-sidedly on trade union activism at the expense of communists' broader ideological, theoretical and political tasks. And for the last several years our main contention within the U.S. communist movement has been with the right opportunist perspective of the Communist Party USA, which glorifies the trade union struggle, often virtually poses it as the only "real" class struggle, and in practice leads to conspicuous tailing of reformist and opportunist forces in the labor movement. Under these circumstances, a stress on the limits of the economic/trade union struggle, strike activity included, has been necessary to solidify our communist ideological foundation and enable us to engage in effective polemic with rightist tendencies on the broader left.

What we have sacrificed with this emphasis, however, has been a vivid and aggressive accentuation of the crucial role the economic struggle in general and strikes in particular can and do play in developing the workers' movement. Within the Line of March labor commission, this stress has been given, and our comrades assigned to trade union work have acquired—through practical experience as well as ideological discussion—an appreciation for the significance of workers going on strike. But recognition of the full potential of strikes by the broader organization has lagged somewhat behind.

As one step toward correcting this and popularizing a more thorough appreciation of the effect when workers unite to withhold their labor-power, we reprint here Lenin's article "On Strikes." It was written at the end of 1899, at a time when strikes were becoming a more conspicuous feature of the class struggle in Russia. While completely blunt about the limitations of strikes relative to the struggle for revolutionary power, Lenin simultaneously emphasizes the crucial role of strikes in developing workers'

political consciousness and building working class solidarity. Overall, the article's systematic treatment of strikes' potential as well as their limitations sets out a precise communist orientation toward this vital feature of the class struggle.

In recent years, workers' strikes have become extremely frequent in Russia. There is no longer a single industrial gubernia in which there have not occurred several strikes. And in the big cities strikes never cease. It is understandable, therefore, that class-conscious workers and socialists should more and more frequently concern themselves with the question of the significance of strikes, of methods of conducting them, and of the tasks of socialists participating in them.

We wish to attempt to outline some of our ideas on these questions. In our first article we plan to deal generally with the significance of strikes in the working class movement; in the second we shall deal with anti-strike laws in Russia; and in the third, with the way strikes were and are conducted in Russia and with the attitude that class-conscious workers should adopt to them.

I

In the first place we must seek an explanation for the outbreak and spread of strikes. Everyone who calls to mind strikes from personal experience, from reports of others, or from the newspapers will see immediately that strikes break out and spread wherever big factories arise and grow in number. It would scarcely be possible to find a single one among the bigger factories employing hundreds (at times even thousands) of workers in which strikes have not occurred. When there were only a few big factories in Russia there were few strikes; but ever since big factories have been multiplying rapidly in both the old industrial districts and in new towns and villages, strikes have become more frequent.

Why is it that large-scale factory production always leads to strikes? It is because capitalism must necessarily lead to a struggle of the workers against the employers, and when production is on a large scale the struggle of necessity takes on the form of strikes.

Let us explain this.

Capitalism is the name given to that social system under which the land, factories, implements, etc., belong to a small number of landed proprietors and capitalists, while the mass of the people possesses no property, or very little property, and is compelled to hire itself out as workers. The landowners and factory owners hire workers and make them produce wares of this or that kind which they sell on the market. The factory owners, furthermore, pay the workers only

such a wage as provides a bare subsistence for them and their families, while everything the worker produces over and above this amount goes into the factory owner's pocket, as his profit. Under capitalist economy, therefore, the people in their mass are the hired workers of others, they do not work for themselves but work for employers for wages. It is understandable that the employers always try to reduce wages; the less they give the workers, the greater their profit. The workers try to get the highest possible wage in order to provide their families with sufficient and wholesome food, to live in good homes, and to dress as other people do and not like beggars. A constant struggle is, therefore, going on between employers and workers over wages; the employer is free to hire whatever worker he thinks fit and, therefore, seeks the cheapest. The worker is free to hire himself out to an employer of his choice, so that he seeks the dearest, the one that will pay him the most. Whether the worker works in the country or in town, whether he hires himself out to a landlord, a rich peasant, a contractor, or a factory owner, he always bargains with the employer, fights with him over the wages.

But is it possible for a single worker to wage a struggle by himself? The number of working people is increasing: peasants are being ruined and flee from the countryside to the town or the factory. The landlords and factory owners are introducing machines that rob the workers of their jobs. In the cities there are increasing numbers of unemployed and in the villages there are more and more beggars; those who are hungry drive wages down lower and lower. It becomes impossible for the worker to fight against the employer by himself. If the worker demands good wages or tries not to consent to a wage cut, the employer tells him to get out, that there are plenty of hungry people at the gates who would be glad to work for low wages.

When the people are ruined to such an extent that there is always a large number of unemployed in the towns and villages, when the factory owners amass huge fortunes and the small proprietors are squeezed out by the millionaires, the individual worker becomes *absolutely powerless* in face of the capitalist. It then becomes possible for the capitalist to crush the worker completely, to drive him to his death at slave labor and, indeed, not him alone, but his wife and children with him. If we take, for instance, those occupations in which the workers have not yet been able to win the protection of the law and in which they cannot offer resistance to the capitalists, we see an inordinately long working day, sometimes as long as 17-19 hours; we see children of 5 or 6 years of age overstraining themselves at work; we see a generation of permanently hungry workers who are gradually

dying from starvation. Example: the workers who toil in their own homes for capitalists; besides, any worker can bring to mind a host of other examples! Even under slavery or serfdom there was never any oppression of the working people as terrible as that under capitalism when the workers cannot put up a resistance or cannot win the protection of laws that restrict the arbitrary actions of the employers.

And so, in order to stave off their reduction to such extremities, the workers begin a desperate struggle. As they see that each of them, individually, is completely powerless and that the oppression of capital threatens to crush him, the workers begin to revolt jointly against their employers. Workers' strikes begin. At first the workers often fail to realize what they are trying to achieve, lacking consciousness of the *wherefore* of their action; they simply smash the machines and destroy the factories. They merely want to display their wrath to the factory owners; they are trying out their joint strength in order to get out of an unbearable situation, without yet understanding why their position is so hopeless and what they should strive for.

In all countries the wrath of the workers first took the form of isolated revolts—the police and factory owners in Russia call them “mutinies.” In all countries these isolated revolts gave rise to more or less peaceful strikes, on the one hand, and to the all-sided struggle of the working class for its emancipation, on the other.

What significance have strikes (or stoppages) for the struggle of the working class? To answer this question, we must first have a fuller view of strikes. The wages of a worker are determined, as we have seen, by an agreement between the employer and the worker, and if, under these circumstances, the individual worker is completely powerless, it is obvious that workers must fight jointly for their demands, they are compelled to organize strikes either to prevent the employers from reducing wages or to obtain higher wages. It is a fact that in every country with a capitalist system there are strikes of workers. Everywhere, in all the European countries and in America, the workers feel themselves powerless when they are disunited; they can only offer resistance to the employers jointly, either by striking or threatening to strike. As capitalism develops, as big factories are more rapidly opened, as the petty capitalists are more and more ousted by the big capitalists, the more urgent becomes the need for the joint resistance of the workers, because unemployment increases, competition sharpens between the capitalists who strive to produce their wares at the cheapest (to do which they have to pay the workers as little as possible), and the fluctuations of industry become more accentuated

and crises* more acute. When industry prospers, the factory owners make big profits but do not think of sharing them with the workers; but when a crisis breaks out, the factory owners try to push the losses on to the workers. The necessity for strikes in capitalist society has been recognized to such an extent by everybody in the European countries that the law in those countries does not forbid the organization of strikes; only in Russia barbarous laws against strikes still remain in force (we shall speak on another occasion of these laws and their application).

However, strikes, which arise out of the very nature of capitalist society, signify the beginning of the working class struggle against that system of society. When the rich capitalists are confronted by individual workers, this signifies the utter enslavement of the workers. But when those propertyless workers unite, the situation changes. There is no wealth that can be of benefit to the capitalists if they cannot find workers willing to apply their labor power to the instruments and materials belonging to the capitalists and produce new wealth. As long as workers have to deal with capitalists on an individual basis they remain veritable slaves who must work continuously to profit another in order to obtain a crust of bread, who must forever remain docile and inarticulate hired servants. But when the workers state their demands jointly and refuse to submit to the money-bags, they cease to be slaves, they become human beings, they begin to demand that their labor should not only serve to enrich a handful of idlers, but should also enable those who work to live like human beings. The slaves begin to put forward the demand to become masters, not to work and live as the landlords and capitalists want them to, but as the working people themselves want to. Strikes, therefore, always instill fear into the capitalists, because they begin to undermine their supremacy. “All wheels stand still, if your mighty arm wills it,” a German workers' song says of the working class. And so it is in reality: the factories, the landlords' land, the machines, the railways, etc., etc., are all like wheels in a giant machine—the machine that extracts various products, processes them, and delivers them to their destination. The whole of this machine is set in motion by *the worker* who tills the

*We shall deal elsewhere in greater detail with crises in industry and their significance to the workers. Here we shall merely note that during recent years in Russia industrial affairs have been going well, industry has been “prospering,” but that now (at the end of 1899) there are already clear signs that this “prosperity” will end in a crisis: difficulties in marketing goods, bankruptcies of factory owners, the ruin of petty proprietors, and terrible calamities for the workers (unemployment, reduced wages, etc.).

soil, extracts ores, makes commodities in the factories, builds houses, workshops, and railways. When the workers refuse to work, the entire machine threatens to stop. Every strike reminds the capitalists that it is the workers and not they who are the real masters—the workers who are more and more loudly proclaiming their rights. Every strike reminds the workers that their position is not hopeless, that they are not alone. See what a tremendous effect strikes have both on the strikers themselves and on the workers at neighboring or nearby factories or at factories in the same industry. In normal, peaceful times the worker does his job without a murmur, does not contradict the employer, and does not discuss his condition. In times of strikes he states his demands in a loud voice, he reminds the employers of all their abuses, he claims his rights, he does not think of himself and his wages alone, he thinks of all his workmates who have downed tools together with him and who stand up for the workers' cause, fearing no privations. Every strike means many privations for the working people, terrible privations that can be compared only to the calamities of war—hungry families, loss of wages, often arrests, banishment from the towns where they have their homes and their employment. Despite all these sufferings, the workers despise those who desert their fellow workers and make deals with the employers. Despite all these sufferings, brought on by strikes, the workers of neighboring factories gain renewed courage when they see that their comrades have engaged themselves in struggle. "People who endure so much to bend one single bourgeois will be able to break the power of the whole bourgeoisie," said one great teacher of socialism, Engels, speaking of the strikes of the English workers. It is often enough for one factory to strike, for strikes to begin immediately in a large number of factories. What a great moral influence strikes have, how they affect workers who see that their comrades have ceased to be slaves and, if only for the time being, have become people on an equal footing with the rich! Every strike brings thoughts of socialism very forcibly to the worker's mind, thoughts of the struggle of the entire working class for emancipation from the oppression of capital. It has often happened that before a big strike the workers of a certain factory or a certain branch of industry or of a certain town knew hardly anything and scarcely ever thought about socialism; but after the strike, study circles and associations become much more widespread among them and more and more workers become socialists.

A strike teaches workers to understand what the strength of the employers and what the strength of the workers consists in; it teaches them not to think of their own employer alone and not of their own

immediate workmates alone but of all the employers, the whole class of capitalists and the whole class of workers. When a factory owner who has amassed millions from the toil of several generations of workers refuses to grant a modest increase in wages or even tries to reduce wages to a still lower level and, if the workers offer resistance, throws thousands of hungry families out into the street, it becomes quite clear to the workers that the capitalist class as a whole is the enemy of the whole working class and that the workers can depend only on themselves and their united action. It often happens that a factory owner does his best to deceive the workers, to pose as a benefactor, and conceal his exploitation of the workers by some petty sops or lying promises. A strike always demolishes this deception at one blow by showing the workers that their "benefactor" is a wolf in sheep's clothing.

A strike, moreover, opens the eyes of the workers to the nature, not only of the capitalists, but of the government and the laws as well. Just as the factory owners try to pose as benefactors of the workers, the government officials and their lackeys try to assure the workers that the tsar and the tsarist government are equally solicitous of both the factory owners and the workers, as justice requires. The worker does not know the laws, he has no contact with government officials, especially with those in the higher posts, and, as a consequence often believes all this. Then comes a strike. The public prosecutor, the factory inspector, the police, and frequently troops, appear at the factory. The workers learn that they have violated the law: the employers are permitted by law to assemble and openly discuss ways of reducing workers' wages, but workers are declared criminals if they come to a joint agreement! Workers are driven out of their homes; the police close the shops from which the workers might obtain food on credit, an effort is made to incite the soldiers against the workers even when the workers conduct themselves quietly and peacefully. Soldiers are even ordered to fire on the workers and when they kill unarmed workers by shooting the fleeing crowd in the back, the tsar himself sends the troops an expression of his gratitude (in this way the tsar thanked the troops who had killed striking workers in Yaroslavl in 1895). It becomes clear to every worker that the tsarist government is his worst enemy, since it defends the capitalists and binds the workers hand and foot. The workers begin to understand that laws are made in the interests of the rich alone; that government officials protect those interests; that the working people are gagged and not allowed to make known their needs; that the working class must win for itself the right to strike, the right to publish workers' newspapers, the right to

participate in a national assembly that enacts laws and supervises their fulfilment. The government itself knows full well that strikes open the eyes of the workers and for this reason it has such a fear of strikes and does everything to stop them as quickly as possible. One German Minister of the Interior, one who was notorious for the persistent persecution of socialists and class-conscious workers, not without reason, stated before the people's representatives: "Behind every strike lurks the hydra [monster] of revolution." Every strike strengthens and develops in the workers the understanding that the government is their enemy and that the working class must prepare itself to struggle against the government for the people's rights.

Strikes, therefore, teach the workers to unite; they show them that they can struggle against the capitalists only when they are united; strikes teach the workers to think of the struggle of the whole working class against the whole class of factory owners and against the arbitrary, police government. This is the reason that socialists call strikes "a school of war," a school in which the workers learn to make war on their enemies for the liberation of the whole people, of all who labor, from the yoke of government officials and from the yoke of capital.

"A school of war" is, however, not war itself. When strikes are widespread among the workers, some of the workers (including some socialists) begin to believe that the working class can confine itself to strikes, strike funds, or strike associations alone; that by strikes alone the working class can achieve a considerable improvement in its conditions or even its emancipation. When they see what power there is in a united working class and even in small strikes, some think that the working class has only to organize a general strike throughout the whole country for the workers to get everything they want from the capitalists and the government. This idea was also expressed by the workers of other countries when the working class movement was in its early stages and the workers were still very inexperienced. *It is a mistaken idea.* Strikes are one of the ways in which the working class struggles for its emancipation, but they are not the only way; and if the workers do not turn their attention to other means of conducting the struggle, they will slow down the growth and the successes of the working class. It is true that funds are needed to maintain the workers during strikes, if strikes are to be successful. Such workers' funds (usually funds of workers in separate branches of industry, separate trades or workshops) are maintained in all countries; but here in Russia this is especially difficult, because the police keep track of

them, seize the money, and arrest the workers. The workers, of course, are able to hide from the police; naturally, the organization of such funds is valuable, and we do not want to advise workers against setting them up. But it must not be supposed that workers' funds, when prohibited by law, will attract large numbers of contributors, and so long as the membership in such organizations is small, workers' funds will not prove of great use. Furthermore, even in those countries where workers' unions exist openly and have huge funds at their disposal, the working class can still not confine itself to strikes as a means of struggle. All that is necessary is a hitch in the affairs of industry (a crisis, such as the one that is approaching in Russia today) and the factory owners will even deliberately cause strikes, because it is to their advantage to cease work for a time and to deplete the workers' funds. The workers, therefore, cannot, under any circumstances, confine themselves to strike actions and strike associations. Secondly, strikes can only be successful where workers are sufficiently class-conscious, where they are able to select an opportune moment for striking, where they know how to put forward their demands, and where they have connections with socialists and are able to procure leaflets and pamphlets through them. There are still very few such workers in Russia, and every effort must be exerted to increase their number in order to make the working class cause known to the masses of workers and to acquaint them with socialism and the working class struggle. This is a task that the socialists and class-conscious workers must undertake jointly by organizing a socialist working class party for this purpose. Thirdly, strikes, as we have seen, show the workers that the government is their enemy and that a struggle against the government must be carried on. Actually, it is strikes that have gradually taught the working class of all countries to struggle against the governments for workers' rights and for the rights of the people as a whole. As we have said, only a socialist workers' party can carry on this struggle by spreading among the workers a true conception of the government and of the working class cause. On another occasion we shall discuss specifically how strikes are conducted in Russia and how class-conscious workers should avail themselves of them. Here we must point out that strikes are, as we said above, "a school of war" and not the war itself, that strikes are only one means of struggle, only one aspect of the working class movement. From individual strikes the workers can and must go over, as indeed they are actually doing in all countries, to a struggle of the entire working class for the emancipation of all who labor. When all class-conscious workers become socialists, i.e., when they strive for this emancipation,

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when they unite throughout the whole country in order to spread socialism among the workers, in order to teach the workers all the means of struggle against their enemies, when they build up a socialist workers' party that struggles for the emancipation of the people as a whole from government oppression and for the

emancipation of all working people from the yoke of capital—only then will the working class become an integral part of that great movement of the workers of all countries that unites all workers and raises the red banner inscribed with the words: "Workers of all countries unite!"

Professionalizing the Marxist-Leninist Education Project for the Present Stage of Party Building

by the National Executive Committee of the Marxist-Leninist Education Project

A national conference of the Marxist-Leninist Education Project (MLEP) was held in February, 1986 to summarize the MLEP's work over the last few years and identify the main challenges and features in the period ahead. The meeting brought together approximately 35 activists from 13 cities who have the main responsibility for conducting the MLEP's efforts.

This article reviews a number of the main points discussed in the February conference; its principal purpose is to elaborate the significance and tasks of Marxist-Leninist education in the current stage of party building and to substantiate our contention that there must be renewed attention paid to the improvement and expansion of the education work of our trend if it is to be adequate for the growing tasks before us.

INTRODUCTION

The Marxist-Leninist Education Project (MLEP) was founded in 1978 to serve the educational needs of the U.S. communist movement. Since that time, MLEP has flourished and taught revolutionary theory to hundreds of political activists in numerous cities across the country.

A ten-month course which provides a comprehensive basic understanding of Marxism-Leninism to aspiring communists, and a ten-week course which introduces revolutionary activists to Marxism, constitute the core of the MLEP curriculum. Over the years, the MLEP has steadily updated and improved its study materials, enhanced its teacher training efforts, and refined its organizational and ideological work. Recent trends in the MLEP have been encouraging, including a rise in the number of students and improvement in the quality of teaching.

However, we believe there are a number of important changes which must be made over the next few years if MLEP is to continue to meet the challenges of communist educational tasks. These changes are

dictated by the many new developments that have taken place in the Line of March, the communist movement as a whole, and the broader left and people's movements. In particular our efforts to forge the Line of March all-sidedly as a distinct wing of the communist movement and increase recruitment to the organization have placed a renewed premium on Marxist-Leninist educational work and created new conditions for its implementation.

Currently the Line of March is involved in a multitude of complex tasks and is experiencing a steady increase in its influence and potential for growth. Yet as our fusion tasks have expanded, there has been a tendency to downplay our independent work as communists, including Marxist-Leninist education. If not checked, this tendency will serve to undermine our political gains, since Marxist-Leninist educational work is key not only to maintaining the communist quality of our organization and recruitment, but also to the political and ideological stabilization of our united front work.

Therefore the first and foremost change required in the Line of March's education work is to give more priority to the MLEP and re-establish it as one of the central institutions of our trend, to re-institutionalize and professionalize our educational work.

At the same time, the characteristics of the incoming MLEP students have undergone a significant change as well. The great majority of our current periphery are relatively unfamiliar with Marxism-Leninism and the communist movement, in contrast to many people we worked with and recruited in earlier years. This places new challenges on teachers to effectively convey the theoretical material and increases the complexity of political and organizational work that must be conducted. Consequently, the MLEP is also faced with the need to refine and readjust our curriculum, teaching methods, organizational and ideological work to suit the changing character of the student pool.

The key to grasping the necessity and content of these changes lies in a clarification of the role of MLEP in the party building process. Only with such an understanding can we begin to readjust the way MLEP is viewed and implemented around the country, and refine the goals, standards, methods and content of each of MLEP's main components. To draw out these points, the first section of this article reviews the significance of Marxist-Leninist education in party building and fusion more generally. The second section addresses the concrete history and current stage of MLEP in relation to Line of March's party building efforts. Finally, the third section identifies the main requirements needed to reinstitutionalize and improve the work of the MLEP in the next few years.

I. SIGNIFICANCE OF EDUCATION IN MARXISM-LENINISM IN PARTY BUILDING AND FUSION

The need for training communists in Marxist-Leninist theory may appear quite obvious from the statement of our general party building tasks, which are to: (1) apply Marxism-Leninism to the conditions of the U.S. revolution, forging an advanced political line; (2) unify Marxist-Leninists, and (3) make Marxism-Leninism a material force in the working class movement.

If our essential role is bound up with the assertion, elaboration and application of Marxism-Leninism to the conditions of the U.S. class struggle, then it follows that the party ranks must have a firm foundation in Marxism-Leninism as their revolutionary theory and scientific method. Yet, except in those rare periods in a communist organization when internal or theoretical work assumes primary importance, there is an inevitable tension between a recognized need for theoretical training of the cadre, and the pressing demands of their practical political work.

Furthermore, the Line of March is entering a stage of its development where many communist formations which have come before us have faltered in the attention paid to educating their members in Marxism-Leninism—precisely at the point where the practical work and political influence of the organization is experiencing conspicuous growth. The Line of March has a relatively developed political line and strategy; we conduct extensive practical work in arenas and cities across the country, publish a quality theoretical journal and newspaper, and have a complex and effective organizational apparatus. As a result, we are beginning to face the concrete problem of weighing the importance of conducting systematic theoretical training in the face of pressing political tasks in the class struggle. Yet ironically, in the face of this

contradiction the importance of sustaining systematic training in Marxism-Leninism becomes more crucial than ever before.

It is important the communist ranks be knowledgeable not only of a party's particular line, but also have a grasp of the fundamentals of revolutionary theory and scientific method more generally. Communist theoretical tasks do not fall only upon party leadership or theoreticians; they present themselves in all facets and levels of communist work. The development of propaganda, the application of a general strategy to distinct arenas, the struggle with opportunists—all these require elements of both theoretical and political knowledge. Thus, the training of party members in Marxist-Leninist theory serves to strengthen communist independent work, and maximizes the initiative of individual members. Furthermore, it is crucial to the party's internal health, in that it helps ensure the vitality of democratic centralism and guards against opportunism.

The fusion process itself implies fusing *communism* with the working class struggle, not simply positioning individual communists within it. The communists must attempt not only to bring an advanced line to a particular struggle, but also some broader appreciation of the class (and other) contradictions at play, a dialectical and historical materialist approach to the work, etc. While a skilled and flexible utilization of Marxism-Leninism in political practice can only develop with experience, the initial study of this theory is also an indispensable foundation. In other words, it cannot come through practical experience in the class struggle alone.

Further, the task of training recruits to the communist ranks in Marxism-Leninism has a highlighted importance given the pronounced pragmatism and anti-intellectual bent in the U.S. left and U.S. society more generally. Thus, it is common for many advanced workers and progressive activists to develop a commitment to anti-capitalist and even revolutionary politics, yet have little or no familiarity with a Marxist-Leninist world view. Often, they are knowledgeable about one aspect of imperialism—working class exploitation, racism, sexism, national oppression—based on their political and personal experience, yet lack a broader understanding of the political economy of imperialism, the functioning of the bourgeois state, the role of a united front and vanguard party, and the world revolutionary process. As these activists are brought into the communist movement, it is absolutely crucial that they become systematically educated in Marxism-Leninism to enable them to overcome a narrow and short-range understanding of the class struggle and gain the strategic vantage point

of communism.

Education in Marxism-Leninism is thus vitally necessary for the communist ranks. But in addition, communists also have a much broader responsibility for education work, which is to popularize Marxism-Leninism beyond the communist ranks, within the working class and progressive movement more generally. The maturation of the united front of the working class, and ultimate success of the revolutionary struggle will require, among other things, that millions of workers become acquainted with Marxism. A developed proletarian class consciousness, whose highest expression is Marxism-Leninism, will not emerge spontaneously; it will require extensive educational and propaganda work by the communists.

Training the working class in Marxism-Leninism is obviously a long-range task which will advance in relation to the capacity and maturation of both the communist and working class movements. Broadly understood, however, the educational work of communists takes many forms, including propaganda, the communist newspaper, speeches, forums, discussion groups, workers schools, cultural activities, etc. At all stages of their development, communists must strive to maximize the understanding and influence of Marxism in the working class. In short, revolutionary theory must over time become the property of the broad social forces of revolution far beyond the organized ranks of the communists.

The Line of March, through the MLEP, has attempted to consciously address these two essential education tasks—teaching Marxist-Leninist fundamentals to communists, and popularizing Marxism in the working class—in the form of the “long” and “short” courses respectively.

The MLEP long course serves essentially to train new Line of March members in Marxism-Leninism; it is aimed principally at recruits and potential recruits. It is meant to be a relatively thorough exposure to the fundamentals of revolutionary theory, including dialectical and historical materialism, political economy, imperialism, the state, the party, the world revolutionary process, and opportunism. These topics are generally covered on three levels: clarifying the essential theoretical concepts; discussing their political significance, and providing an overview of their historical and contemporary expressions in revolutionary theory and politics. The long course places a lot of responsibility on the students themselves for preparation and active participation, and encourages a rigorous collective effort to grasp and apply the theoretical concepts. It is assumed that on completion of the MLEP long course, activists will have a foundation in Marxist-Leninist theory adequate to consciously function in the communist

movement.

The MLEP short course addresses the general task of popularizing Marxism-Leninism on a more mass basis—at a level corresponding to our current capacity, of course. The brief syllabus of ten sessions focuses principally on a basic introduction to concepts of Marxism-Leninism (dialectical and historical materialism, political economy of capitalism and imperialism, the state and party), and includes an overview of the politics of our trend (the United Front Against War and Racism, racism, the labor aristocracy and the world revolutionary process). It is aimed at the broadest periphery of Line of March and its related mass organizations, with the goal of acquainting activists with Marxism-Leninism in order to strengthen the Marxist underpinning of the united front and hopefully serve as the first stage for a number of the activists to begin the process of actually becoming communists.

II. HISTORY AND CURRENT STAGE OF MLEP IN RELATION TO PARTY BUILDING

Broadly speaking, the MLEP has gone through three phases of development which parallel the three stages of our party building effort as a whole.

The first stage was that of cohering a Marxist-Leninist trend, in which uniting comrades on a correct approach to party building—in particular the decisive task of rectifying the general line of the communist movement—came to the fore. Theoretical tasks were paramount in this period, and MLEP played a central role in equipping trend activists to take them up.

Progress toward rectifying the general line (in particular developing the United Front Against War and Racism strategy), as well as the changing constituency of the trend, led to the second stage. This was a period of growth and transition, where our work was guided by the conception of “fusion as the key link.” Our priorities were on forging the political institutions of the Line of March for mass propaganda and intervention in the class struggle. This resulted in the relative deprioritization of theoretical work, including the MLEP.

Our progress in this work, as well as the slim prospects of achieving any substantial communist unity with the CPUSA in the near future, has now led to a third stage, which is characterized by the need for Line of March to develop our wing of the communist movement all-sidedly. This constitutes a spiral development, in that the current stage of party building retains and is based on fusion as the key link, yet also requires a significant refocus and re-emphasis on our distinctly party building tasks. This is necessary to insure that our gains in fusion work actually contribute to the expansion of our party and the mainte-

nance of its communist foundation. Hopefully, this general point will become clear as we detail the role of MLEP in these three stages and highlight the renewed role MLEP must play in the present period.

A. Development of MLEP in Relation to the Stages of Our Party Building Efforts

In the first phase of its development, roughly from its founding in 1978 to 1981, MLEP was one of the central institutions of what was at the time termed the "anti-revisionist, anti-left opportunist" trend. The main party building task at that time was to cohere the trend and organize collective theoretical efforts toward rectifying the general line of the U.S. communist movement.

In this context, MLEP was founded for two inter-related reasons. The general reason was to rectify the sloppy and inadequate approach to Marxist-Leninist educational work that had shackled the U.S. communist movement during the 1960s and '70s with a low level of theoretical training that, in turn, stultified all of its work and contributed to the dominance of both "left" and right opportunist deviations within it.

The specific reason for founding MLEP was a bold attempt to equip hundreds of activists to participate in the party building process at a time when that process centered principally on theoretical work and political debate. Numerous political line struggles raged within the trend as it tried to complete its break with Maoism. The Line of March itself had no formal political unity other than on its approach to party building and the broad lines of demarcation with "left" and right opportunism. The United Front Against War and Racism line had not yet been developed and almost all people who held what was then termed the "rectification party building line" were involved in one way or another with the theoretical tasks.

Given this, MLEP was central to being able to launch a rectification movement with a mass quality to it, giving individual activists a common basis to participate in an extremely difficult period of theoretical work. Teachers were chosen from the most experienced, leading comrades, and most of the students were already self-conscious party builders with some previous experience in the communist and broader mass movements. Many of the MLEP students in this period came to form the cadre core of the current Line of March.

By 1981 a number of changes had occurred, which set the basis to advance to a new stage in our party building efforts. The Line of March had developed a fairly comprehensive political line, and united the bulk of the trend around it. The Organizing Committee for an Ideological Center, which had been based

on an anti-theoretical, rightist party building line, had fallen apart, and the earlier period of significant debate and realignment within the trend receded considerably. We recognized that further qualitative advances in the areas of advancing political line and uniting communists would be contingent on progress in the struggle to make our line a material force in the class struggle itself.

Given this, the key link in the party building process shifted from *theoretical* to *fusion* tasks. From 1982-85 the trend was in a "transition period" in which the key task was to forge the central institutions needed to take the first significant steps in our fusion work—the newspaper, the national commissions, local Line of March structures, mass organizations, etc. This was, and continues to be, complex and demanding political and organizational work. And given the relative political inexperience of the Line of March operation as a whole, our ever-increasing work in these areas constitute a great challenge, straining our limited resources to the utmost.

Given the priority placed on fusion tasks, the theoretical work of the Line of March, including the MLEP, naturally fell considerably in priority during this second "transition period." Furthermore, since our fusion work was in its initial stage and the spontaneous people's movement itself was relatively undeveloped through much of the same period, most local Line of March operations had small peripheries from which MLEP students could be drawn. During those years there were fewer MLEP classes with fewer students than before; continuity of MLEP local leadership and teachers was tenuous or lost, and relatively less experienced cadre were assigned to teach the MLEP. We view these developments in the MLEP as justifiable and necessary given the overall context of the period, as they corresponded to the conditions and priorities we then faced.

Now, however, we have entered into a new stage of party building, that of strengthening all-sidedly our distinct wing of the communist movement. This new stage was ushered in on the basis of the initial progress in our fusion tasks and the relatively sorry state of our unity/struggle relations with the CPUSA.

Specifically, our newspaper, commissions, and number of mass organizations have been established, bringing the Line of March and the United Front Against War and Racism line successfully, if only initially, into key movements and arenas of struggle. Although uneven from city to city, this has resulted in a fairly steady growth of our periphery, and thus a potential for gaining new MLEP students and recruits. At the same time, we recognize that resolving the major contradiction in the communist movement, in particular our struggle for Marxist-Leninist unity

with the CPUSA, will be a very protracted and difficult process. Therefore, our current party building task is to strengthen our wing of the communist movement by consolidating an all-sided party operation.

This places an increased emphasis on the need for Line of March to substantially expand our organization's ranks and consolidate our periphery. And it in turn highlights the renewed significance of the educational challenge before us, as it is critical that our expansion occurs without sacrificing our fundamental Marxist-Leninist quality. Therefore, MLEP must rise again on our agenda if we are to properly accomplish our overall party building tasks in the period ahead.

We must grasp that while fusion is still the key link in party building, we cannot afford to bow to the spontaneity of the mass movement such that the distinct party building tasks are obscured. Since we are not returning to a period of giving overriding priority to theoretical work, devoting the necessary resources and attention to ensuring the increased quality and expansion of the MLEP work will strain our capacity. Yet we must learn to skillfully conduct our distinct, independent Marxist-Leninist education work in the midst of (and simultaneous with) the most far flung and diverse practical work, because only that work which appropriately combines independent Marxist-Leninist work with mass work can really be considered communist fusion.

B. MLEP in the Current Stage of Party Building

Despite our overall maturation, there is a marked tendency to carry over some of the assumptions and practices of the previous "transition period" into the present in regards to MLEP. The most negative reflections of this tendency are failure to promote and use the courses adequately, and failure to stabilize personnel and to assign appropriate cadre. A key step toward altering this is reorienting the operation as a whole on the role of MLEP in this period.

The general role of the MLEP in party building remains essentially unchanged: it is the training of members and supporters of the Line of March in Marxism-Leninism. Such training is fundamental to guarding the Marxist-Leninist quality of our organization. Although we are a young organization, we have already gone through many important line refinements and alterations, and the complexity of our particular revolution guarantees that we must inevitably go through many, many more in order to meet the challenges ahead. This will require an organization and membership with a consolidated Marxist-Leninist character. In our view, failure to adequately

train the communist movement and its supporters in Marxism-Leninism has been one of the cardinal shortcomings of the CPUSA and the source of many of its problems.

However, the particular characteristics of each period of our work highlight certain elements of this task, bringing new elements to light, upgrading or de-prioritizing others, etc. In this period, what has come to the fore is strengthening our wing of the communist movement, which means consolidating and expanding the ranks and the influence of the Line of March, primarily through advancing our fusion work. Such fusion is not simply the expansion of our mass work, though this is certainly a critical element of it, but also involves infusing all our work with a distinct communist character. Since the Line of March is far from being the only communist or left force that is attempting to expand its influence and membership in this period, there objectively exists a competition among different left trends and parties across the spectrum from social democracy to feminism to nationalism to communism—(and the various tendencies within each trend)—to win the developing progressive and revolutionary forces to their programs, world views and initiatives, and recruit them. This "competition," of course, takes place in the context of the effort to forge the strongest possible united action between trends in the fight against Reaganism and the right.

Winning the advanced to our politics is a complex and multifaceted task. It cannot be reduced solely to winning people to the United Front Against War and Racism line. (While this is the substance and focus of contention in many instances, by itself it is insufficient.) We cannot collapse united front politics and communist unity, or drop out the struggle to win people to Marxism-Leninism and socialism. This would represent allowing the struggle for influence in the mass movement to substitute for the distinct task of party building. For these reasons, active and skillful Marxist-Leninist educational work is a crucial element in our expansion and contention in the years ahead.

Obviously the MLEP is not the only form in which we conduct the struggle to win people to Marxism-Leninism, but it is certainly one of the most significant. In this light, the current trends in the MLEP nationally, while improving, still evidence a definite tendency to downplay this crucial element of our work. The general practice in most cities is to organize only one short course per year, and one long course every two to three years. In our opinion, this low level of course offerings does not match the objective possibilities brought about by the expansion of our fusion work and periphery, and reflects a tendency to allow the day-to-day requirements of our

intervention work to overwhelm us and obscure the necessity to give the necessary priority to communist educational work.

The crucial role of the MLEP in our fusion tasks can be illustrated in a very concrete form. The failure to skillfully use the MLEP will quite soon result in serious gaps in the political/ideological consolidation of our periphery and a major bottleneck in our recruitment. The widespread practice of teaching the long course only every two or three years brings this question to a head. Either we will be recruiting many people with little or no training in Marxism-Leninism and thereby jeopardize the communist quality of our ranks and work, or we will be recruiting people only in their ones and twos over the coming years. And the underutilization of the short course results in instability in the consolidation of our united front work and means that few people will be moved along our transmission belts toward the long course and the Line of March.

Although our recruitment trends are quite positive at present, there are no grounds for complacency. Much of our current recruitment is a result of a buildup of supporters over a number of years. As this pool dries up, the shortcomings in our transmission belts, our educational work in particular, will start to stand out unless we take conscious and determined steps to correct them.

III. RE-INSTITUTIONALIZATION AND REFINEMENT OF MLEP WORK

The most important task before us is to re-institutionalize the MLEP as one of the key institutions of our organization and work. Concretely, this means increasing and regularizing courses, improving the process of student recruitment, stabilizing MLEP personnel, and professionalizing the work as a whole. The main burden of implementing this falls first on central bodies, the local executives in conjunction with the MLEP national center.

To advance this work, the MLEP national has set targets for the use of MLEP in the various cities. In those cities with fairly developed peripheries, the goal is to hold at least two short courses and one long course per year. In the other cities where we have fairly developed operations but where the peripheries are smaller, the goal will be one to two short courses per year and one long course every two years.

These targets are actually quite modest. Yet, given the lag in our education work, it will require considerable struggle to attain them.

The key link in this plan is aggressive promotion and utilization of the short course. This is because it is short course graduates who are the main pool of

students ready for the long course, and therefore if the recruitment and teaching of the short course is of good quality, long course recruitment will largely be ensured. We need to raise the consciousness in all areas regarding the role of the short course, and improve on the "publicity" that it receives. We must make sure that the importance of studying Marxism-Leninism is regularly posed to activists in our periphery, and that assessments on this score are regularly made. The ultimate goal is to make our short course the dominant way developing activists get introduced to Marxism-Leninism and begin to sort out their relationship to it. The purpose and role of the short course in our overall work should be understood by all Line of March members, not just among those who are responsible to teach the short course.

The need to increase the number and regularity of MLEP courses, and in many cities achieve the capacity to teach long and short courses simultaneously, poses the other central issue in the re-institutionalization of MLEP: *personnel*. The selection and stabilization of appropriate personnel is in fact the key link in professionalizing the MLEP; it represents the concretization of the priority given to education work, and largely determines the actual potential to successfully implement this work.

Within the category of personnel, the key role is played by the MLEP "anchor"—the cadre with overall responsibility for the work, its continuity, the training of instructors, etc. The anchor is instrumental in the success of the MLEP courses, as he/she oversees both the recruitment and teaching aspects and provides the link to local boards and executives. This position should be filled by a comrade who is developed relatively all-sidedly, and competent organizationally.

In those cities aiming to teach long and short courses simultaneously, the formation of collectives with overall responsibility for the MLEP—"education teams"—is called for. This will help ensure that there is adequate leadership for both long and short courses, and that the accumulation of experience and continuity, which are the hallmarks of institutionalization and professionalization, start to characterize our educational work.

Regarding the selection of study leaders, there are two key considerations: choosing people with a genuine flair for educational work, and stabilizing these comrades in the MLEP rather than relying on a system of rotation. Every type of work has its particular requirements as regards skill, training, and orientation and the MLEP is no different. We must conscientiously identify comrades who have an interest in theory, a flair for teaching, and who firmly grasp the importance of and enjoy the process of parti-

icipating in teaching Marxism-Leninism.

Re-institutionalization of the MLEP is our overall goal, yet accomplishing this also requires changes internal to the MLEP to suit the tasks and conditions of this period. The multi-faceted character of our work, the push for increased membership in the Line of March, the size and political characteristics of our periphery, etc. combine to necessitate a number of significant changes in the MLEP. Course curriculums and goals, teaching methods, as well as organizational and ideological work all need to be refined and improved.

A. The Long Course

The purpose of the long course remains unchanged: to provide the basic theoretical training in the fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism necessary for people to function as communists. However, the maturation of our party building effort, the new tasks and membership requirements, along with the relative theoretical inexperience of many of those now entering the communist movement, dictate changes in how the long course is to be understood and conducted.

The specific goal of the long course in this period is to prepare people to function in the communist movement as part of the Line of March. Although the attention given to theoretical tasks is still an outstanding feature of our trend, the theoretical work of our membership as a whole is conditioned by the massive tasks and challenges of intervention in the spontaneous struggle. Given this situation, it is increasingly difficult to commit significant numbers of activists to almost a year of study that pulls them so substantially out of their political work.

Therefore, the main change we are making in the long course is to shorten it to six months from the present ten. This is intended to be primarily a quantitative change and not a qualitative one. The course will still provide comprehensive training in the fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism, covering philosophy, political economy, Lenin's classical political works, contemporary world and U.S. revolutionary strategy, and opportunism. But many topics will be treated in fewer sessions than before.

Advances in our political line have also altered the content of the fundamentals course somewhat. We have significantly augmented the section on contemporary political strategy recently, adding two sessions on existing socialism and its role in the world revolutionary process; one session on racism and its relation to U.S. capitalism and the class struggle, and one session on the composition of the U.S. working class and the problem of opportunism. This new material is critical in that, with its addition, the section on Contemporary Political Strategy effectively orients

MLEP students theoretically and politically to the international communist movement and the Leninist wing of the U.S. communist movement.

The changed character of entering students also has an impact on the long course. While we continue to draw some "veteran" activists with varying degrees of previous exposure to Marxist-Leninist theory, the vast majority of students have virtually no background in revolutionary theory. (The short course was likely their first exposure.) A large proportion of incoming MLEP students have been politicized in the 1980s, and many lack the most basic knowledge of U.S. and international political history. This places a major challenge on study leaders to provide historical and political background and examples to make the theoretical material come alive for students.

This changing character of the "average" MLEP student also has implications for the political and ideological goals of the long course. In the past, the great majority of students already united politically with the communist movement and sought theoretical consolidation on Marxism-Leninism. Currently, the majority of students entering the course are not completely won to communism, and there is an objective need for the course to undertake the process of *winning* students to, as well as consolidating them around, communism. This is a shade of difference, but one with many practical implications for the course. In the first place, it speaks to what can and cannot be assumed as the starting point of the study; the point being that many students are relatively unfamiliar with the most basic theses of Marxism-Leninism, and thus have not completely thought through their level of agreement with and commitment to them. Yet, in recognizing this, we must emphasize that *consolidation* is still the principal task of the course, and warn against dropping the goals of the course simply to winning people to communism. To do so would be to sever the link between the long course and recruitment to Line of March and open the course to students who have no intention of becoming communists in the near future. This would serve to qualitatively derail the course, in that its central purpose is profoundly political; we strive to theoretically train activists in Marxism-Leninism as a crucial means of building and strengthening the communist movement. Therefore, we need to continue to insist that the fundamentals course is predominated by students who are oriented towards *participation* in the communist movement.

The work of shortening the fundamentals course, involving adjusting the curriculum, teaching methods, and organization to meet the needs of the current period, has already begun, but it will undoubtedly

take a number of years to complete.

B. The Short Course

Originally the short course was founded as a kind of "Head Start" program for people who wanted to take the long course but who were not quite prepared to do so given their sparse theoretical background. In the past few years, however, the course has been conceptualized with a distinct purpose of its own: introducing Marxism-Leninism to revolutionary activists. In other words, the class is aimed at people who have acquired political sympathy with the need for fundamental social change in the U.S., but who may have no definitely formed opinion of Marxism-Leninism or communism.

Put another way, the class is oriented to intercept the spontaneously radicalized elements and to begin their education in Marxism-Leninism. Through this introduction to Marxism-Leninism, the hope is that most or all of them will have their revolutionary politics solidified such that they become more consistent left forces in the united front and become part of the periphery of the communist movement. Additionally, it is hoped that at least some of them will go on to take the long course and start to function as part of the communist movement.

The new understanding of the role of MLEP in this period of party building does not significantly alter the purpose and goals of the short course. However, it does place a premium importance on expanding and improving the short course work. As mentioned earlier, in this period the party building struggle has been extended beyond the communist movement itself to the advanced elements. This struggle takes many forms. Much of it centers on the struggle for the United Front Against War and Racism line, in theory and practical activity, through such forms as the *Frontline* newspaper, Frontline Forums, our other propaganda forms, and, of course, our various organizing initiatives. But another crucial element is the process of introducing and winning people to Marxism-Leninism, a process to which the MLEP short course is key.

In essence, a struggle between the different left wing trends (as well as against reformism) occurs for the "hearts and minds" of those people stepping forward into the class struggle and adopting some kind of revolutionary viewpoint. These individuals are just sorting out their world view and politics, consciously or unconsciously deciding which political trend they will become a part of as their politics become more definite and consolidated. They are grappling with political questions such as the nature and role of the socialist camp, the proper approach to the struggle against racism, the path to uniting the working class,

the fights against sexism, gay oppression, etc., as well as crucial theoretical questions such as the source and roots of the poverty of developing countries and minorities in the U.S., exploitation and the problems of capitalism, the nature of the state and the revolutionary potential of the working class, etc.

Sooner or later most these activists will become fairly conscious forces in one or another tendency, and they will do this by comparing the perspectives enunciated by different political parties and trends. Even as we often participate together in joint actions, the various trends of social democracy, revolutionary nationalism, anarchism, feminism, Maoism, Trotskyism and communism (and the tendencies internal to each trend) fight it out to convince people that theirs is the most correct and effective world outlook and political program.

The short course is (or should be) on the frontline of this battle. It presents Marxism-Leninism from the standpoint of our trend, and provides a favorable setting for people to sort out their opinion of it, theoretically and politically. We do not expect the short course to completely win people to Marxism-Leninism, but we do have the goal that all students get some grasp of its broad contours and understand that it represents a coherent and compelling theory that underlies the most advanced revolutionary developments of the modern world. We expect that most short course graduates, even if they maintain some important differences, will have given serious consideration to Marxism-Leninism and our trend, and that most will leave with a favorable impression. Some will actually decide that communism is the trend that they should function within, and strive to become Marxist-Leninists themselves. Hence the crucial importance of the short course.

The limits on the course are set by the political level of students brought in—revolutionary activists who for the most part are not consolidated in any trend but are interested enough in ours to take the course—and the brevity of the course. In ten weeks we try to convey the sweep, scientific character, and revolutionary working class essence of Marxism-Leninism, and to give a glimpse at our understanding of the revolutionary process at home and internationally. We introduce basic theoretical principles but also try to demonstrate that this theory can address a tremendous variety of concrete questions: that Marxism-Leninism is a living science consisting of certain fundamental tenets but also a scientific method that can comprehend the world in its constant change, variety and development. We are struggling to convey the proletarian revolutionary view of the world and how to change it in a way that concepts come alive and provide system, depth and illumination to what

students already perceive to be the concrete problems of contemporary imperialism.

In this light, one of the main problems we face is that of learning how to teach this course well. It is often thought that teaching the short course is considerably easier than teaching the long course, because the theoretical content is quite basic and the course much shorter. While there is an element of truth here, this view is fundamentally fallacious and leads to mistaking of cadre and unsuccessful short courses. What is important is to grasp the particular demands of teaching the short course, compared to the long course, rather than making judgements about which might be "easier or harder."

Short course students are much more diverse—politically, theoretically and ideologically—than are long course students, who for the most part are already oriented towards becoming communists. They therefore present a variety of distinct challenges. The truth of Marxism must be *proven* to them and they are far from being willing to accept answers to the questions they have simply on the grounds that "this is the Marxist view." They often pose very sweeping, diverse and fundamental questions (not always presented from a completely sympathetic standpoint) and will not settle for shallow answers. Most lack systematic experience working or studying collectively, especially in such heterogeneous groupings (racially, classwise, etc.) as these classes tend to be. In short, we have ten short weeks in which we must try to present an enormous amount of material, and answer the questions of these extremely lively and often slightly unruly groupings!

To do so effectively requires political and theoretical knowledge, an ability to quickly comprehend the basis, logic and implications of people's questions and respond in a relevant and vivid fashion—i.e., considerable flexibility and creativity, as well as knowledge of what kinds of questions, prejudices and angles students come in with. The challenge is that in the short course the teacher is unmistakably just that—the teacher who knows qualitatively more about the essential subject matter, Marxism, than any student—yet cannot simply program the course according to rigid, preconceived notions about "how students are supposed to learn."

Clearly this is a most challenging and exciting assignment, one which, like all others, requires particular skills, knowledge and interest. Strict attention to identifying teachers with some of these talents and interests is absolutely key—ten weeks go by very quickly and do not provide a lot of time to make up for deficiencies of the instructors. For this reason it is important to combine experienced teachers and anchors with inexperienced ones, lest the lessons of the

past not be brought to bear on this very brief, quite intense class. Developing a consistent anchor combined with a "pool" of potential teachers from different areas of work is highly recommended in order to match teachers to the particular composition of each student group.

In further considering the goals of the course, it is useful to discuss the relationship between the short course as part of our transmission belt/recruitment process and its function in the dissemination and popularization of Marxism-Leninism more broadly. Let's examine each in turn.

In most cases the principal emphasis should be on the "transmission belt" aspect. Even though we do not expect all students to move directly to communism, our main aim in teaching the course at the present time is to begin the process of pulling people in that direction. Naturally this process is quite all-sided in character, and as a qualitative leap in consciousness does not take place overnight: for some short course students it may never happen and for others it may be a long time in coming. Nonetheless we teach the short course in the context of and as an integral part of that overall process. The short course is meant to provide an introduction to Marxist-Leninist theory that even the most committed and active activist cannot receive in the course of their mass political work, but only through a process of self-conscious study.

Of course, the success of the short course as part of the transmission belt is significantly conditioned, and sometimes determined, by the general quality and quantity of the Line of March's work in that city as a whole. Activists' interest in communism is largely shaped by their practical experience with communists in the class struggle, and their potential for becoming communists is very much dependent on the ability of the communist movement to concretely integrate them into an appropriate area of work upon completing the short course (or the long course, for that matter).

We think there is much room for expanding the use and effectiveness of the short course in almost every city. In the first place, most cities generally take a passive approach to organizing classes, get overwhelmed by the practical demands of mass work, and have not committed the necessary and appropriate personnel to ensure that organizing courses and recruiting students is always in the consciousness of the local operation. In addition it should be kept in mind that if the short course is well done and well received, it will begin to produce a sense of excitement and interest among the advanced elements in the city, often independent of our other initiatives. That is, it can achieve a reputation for being the best place to systematically learn Marxism-Leninism, and be

thought of as containing material that every serious activist must become acquainted with. In some cities this process has begun, and is an important verification of the potential of this course.

Also in connection with expanding the use of the course, we want to encourage creativity and flexibility in organizing classes. The advanced elements usually step forward not simply as solitary individuals, but through a process shared with others who happen to be at the same school, workplace, union, neighborhood, or whatever. That is, they tend to present themselves as "circles," or informal networks, even if there is some unevenness of political level among the individuals who constitute them. Moreover, these circles tend to mirror the racial, class, and sexual divisions of the overall society, and often do not, for example, present themselves in multi-racial forms. We believe we must be more flexible in dealing with this objective fact, and experiment with different ways to reflect it in the organization of the short course. For example, we need not rigidly insist that every class have a multi-racial or multi-sectoral character. While such situations are the optimum, and should probably continue to be the rule in our practice, we would like to experiment with, for example, teaching a course consisting primarily or exclusively of activists in and around the Peace and Solidarity Alliance, the Alliance Against Women's Oppression, or a grouping of minority activists in one or another arena of work. Given the myriad of new problems such situations could produce, we insist on strict national control and monitoring over initiating such courses—they should not be started without national approval—but we want the local centers, MLEP cadre, and other Line of March members to begin thinking in these terms and raising for consideration new possibilities for expanding the use of the short course.

The other aspect of the short course is that it is also a vehicle for the popularization of Marxism-Leninism more broadly. It reflects the reasoning that Marxism is not only for communists, but is a scientific, revolutionary class outlook that must eventually become a material force far beyond the communist core. Such is already the case in the socialist countries and even in those capitalist countries where communist movements are truly massive and powerful. Of course in this respect, we in the U.S. are at an extremely modest beginning. But we want to draw attention to it, for this orientation is crucial to proper utilization of the course. At this particular juncture of our work, it is specifically important for us to grasp the importance of teaching Marxism-Leninism to the anti-imperialists and revolutionary forces that must constitute the core of the united front and the pe-

riphery of the communist movement, even if they have no intention of ever becoming communists themselves. The short course is the form for conducting this type of independent work. It is important that a careful survey be done periodically to determine those friends and allies we work with who might fall into this category, and to find appropriate means to incorporate them into the short course.

C. Organizational and Ideological Work

The new conditions and tasks also call for refinement of the organizational and ideological work within the MLEP. Because of the increased political and ideological diversity of the students, we face new challenges and complexities of organizational and ideological work.

Perhaps the most important matter to draw attention to is the increased importance and difficulty of the process of launching MLEP courses. The diversity of students highlights the importance of systematic teacher and student selection processes, and of comprehensive preparation and orientation of teachers and students as well. Underestimation of these tasks has perhaps been the single most widespread and harmful organizational problem in the MLEP, causing teacher instability (including replacement), misunderstandings by students of what they were getting themselves into, selection of students who were not ready for the courses, and even the unnecessary aggravation of tensions within the course participants. Thus, top organizational priority should be paid to the launching process.

Similarly, in the past there were always a number of fairly developed students who not only contributed much to the learning process but also served as a crucial link between the students and the instructors. Such persons are now relatively rare, and it consequently falls upon the instructors to increase their work with the students to keep track of how everyone is doing, and what various factors may be impeding the learning process.

In ideological work, we need to draw attention to combatting petty bourgeois idealist tendencies that aggravate the inevitable "fish bowl" effect of such an intense and prolonged small group experience as the MLEP. The particular characteristics of MLEP—the fact that it is an educational process, that it brings together diverse individuals that often have little previous experience working with each other, the fact that it is so intense and internal—tend to highlight problems in inner group dynamics, personalities, unevenness of education, as well as racial, class and sexual contradictions. Given this, an idealist line on ideological work can lead to unduly aggravating and polarizing differences in a vain attempt to "pro-

letarianize" the students and to "train them in ideological struggle."

Obviously, ideological work is an integral and indispensable element of a successful MLEP class. But its goal should be to enhance the learning of Marxism-Leninism, and should not be to pursue some moralistic notion of ideological purity. Not every "dynamics problem" should be considered an "ideological problem" that requires "ideological struggle," and not every problem requires collective discussion.

At the same time, we realize that there is also the opposite tendency, that of ignoring the very real problems that inevitably crop up, often to the detriment of the minority, working class, and/or women students. The approach in these cases seems to be to ignore problems and hope they won't get out of hand if left alone. This tendency too should be combatted. Any problematic group dynamic that qualitatively jeopardizes the learning of Marxism-Leninism should be the criteria for conducting ideological work and struggle.

Mistakes made in this realm have at times been quite costly, disrupting the educational work, aggravating contradictions to an antagonistic level or allowing them to fester and undermine the unity of the class. A systematic and materialist approach will be the key to improving this work in the future.

CONCLUSION

The present tasks of the Line of March pose renewed emphasis and distinct challenges to our educational work. As our mass intervention work deepens and broadens, the party apparatus must grow sophisticated and flexible enough to ensure the continued Leninist quality of that work. In the next few years, one of the central challenges facing the Line of March is that of appropriately combining attention to building our party apparatus and advancing our independent communist work, while simultaneously expanding our mass work and influence. Our goal is to distinguish ourselves both by our skill and effectiveness in mass work and also by the distinct Marxist-

Leninist quality of our line and work as a whole. Only by so doing can we ensure our growth, stability and increasing influence as a communist formation.

The Leninist thesis that the communist movement and the mass movement are governed by distinct, even if interconnected, laws of motion is quite relevant here. In particular, the demands of work in the mass movement will not by themselves pose the need to undertake our distinctly independent communist and party building tasks. Such work arises not out of the spontaneous motion of the class struggle, but from the consciousness—the goals, line and strategy—of the communists. We alone can put this work on our agenda, and only by doing so will we experience and assimilate the full range of demands and complexities posed to the communists by the class struggle.

Refining, re-institutionalizing and professionalizing the MLEP is one of the key pieces of our party building work at this time. In particular, one of the main tasks of the party building struggle at this stage is to enlarge and consolidate our wing of the communist movement. Unlike the late '70s, at present there is not a lot of motion and realignment between the different revolutionary trends. Consequently the political and ideological training of the advanced elements coming forth from mass struggles is one of the key sites of the party building process. This work mandates improving the quality and quantity of our independent communist work, in particular professionalizing our training capacity in Marxism-Leninism.

Teaching Marxism-Leninism to the advanced is key to unleashing their full potential in the working class united front, to their consolidation on the periphery of the Line of March, and to the recruitment of the most committed and farsighted to our ranks. Teaching Marxism-Leninism to those who are prepared to step forward to become communists is crucial to their consolidation and their capacity to discharge their responsibilities and rights as such.

Heightened consciousness throughout the ranks of the importance of our educational tasks and some of the new demands placed upon us in this field is key to overall success in this work.

Regarding the Ideological Foundations Of Democratic Centralism

by an international study group formed by the World Marxist Review Commission on Problems of Theory, reprinted from World Marxist Review

From its inception as a political organization, the Line of March has sought to organize itself on the basis of democratic centralist principles. The organization has consistently believed that democratic centralism provides the only viable way to conduct communist political practice and train our members to become effective fighters for the cause of the working class.

Of course, the specific application of democratic centralism within our organization has been shaped by our particular political tasks and level of development. In that sense, we are still at an early stage. The essential scaffolding of democratic centralism has been in place for some time, and consistent ideological work has been done within our ranks to consolidate activists on this communist approach to organizational work. But we have not yet codified a detailed set of party rules, nor have we put the electoral principle for selecting the organization's leadership fully in place. And institutions for the full exercise of inner-party democracy are only beginning to take mature shape.

As the organization's work—and our ranks—have rapidly expanded, however, we have given increased attention to developing the procedures and institutions of a more full-blown democratic centralist structure. As a result, the last year has seen some important steps forward. A set of membership guidelines, if not yet detailed party rules, has been adopted and implemented. And we have established the Notes bulletin to popularize summations of our practical experience and provide a vehicle for more broad and active inner-party debate.

This maturation, not surprisingly, has led to greater discussion of organizational matters within our ranks. In particular, it is forcing us to increase our theoretical understanding of the principles of democratic centralism, as well as our grasp of the

international communist movement's experience in implementing them.

Toward those ends, we reprint here a significant article from the October, 1985 issue of the World Marxist Review. "Regarding the Ideological Foundations of Democratic Centralism" is the product of an international study group formed by the World Marxist Review Commission on Problems of Theory. The group's members were George Toubi, central committee secretariat member of the Communist Party of Israel, Unni Krishnan, national council member of the Communist Party of India, and World Marxist Review staff member professor Igor Naletov, Ph.D. We believe the article contains extremely useful and thought provoking material, with a particular contribution being the extended discussion of petty bourgeois deviations from democratic centralism that undermine a party's Marxist-Leninist character.

World Marxist Review is the English language edition of Problems of Peace and Socialism, the theoretical and information journal of communist and workers parties throughout the world. It appears monthly and each issue contains numerous articles and documents of theoretical and political interest. Subscriptions in the U.S. can be obtained for \$20 per year from Imported Publications, 320 West Ohio St., Chicago, Illinois 60610.

As the organizational principle of communist and workers' parties democratic centralism has, in the course of many years of international verification, proved its viability and efficacy. The experience that has been accumulated compellingly indicates that a party can fulfill its historic revolutionary mission only if it complies with this principle. This experience

refutes the argument, offered by some quarters, that democratic centralism is outdated and does not fit in with the present-day conditions of the class struggle. There is an obvious need to go on developing its content, perfecting its forms, and rectifying the deformations to which it is subjected as a consequence of the social-reformist and anarchistic trends infiltrating the communist movement.

All this induces addressing once again the questions of how the ideological and organizational principles of parties are combined in theory and practice. The life-giving propositions advanced by Marx, Engels and Lenin provide the irreplaceable foundation for answering these questions.

The principle of democratic centralism is the outcome, deduction and result of the application of dialectical and historical materialism to the organizational principles of a revolutionary party. A key provision of scientific methodology, determining the successful solution of problems of party building, is the recognition in fact that there is an inseparable dialectical relationship between these principles and the communist movement's ideology.

Condition of the Revolutionary Party's Vital Activity

In a strict sense, democratic centralism is a principle of organization and a form of building implicit in the Marxist and no other parties. This is determined by the content of the ongoing class struggle of the proletariat and by the role of the revolutionary vanguard in this struggle. "Unity on questions of programme and tactics," Lenin wrote, "is an essential but by no means a sufficient condition for party unity, for the centralization of party work.... The latter requires, in addition, unity of organization, which in a party that has grown to be anything more than a mere family circle, is inconceivable without formal Rules, without the subordination of the minority to the majority and of the part to the whole."¹

Only a united party with a single leading body, with the lower bodies subordinated to the higher, with the mandatory—not formal but actual—subordination of the minority to the majority, and with strict party discipline can direct the efforts of the working class, the working people, and all other progressive forces towards the overthrow of the exploiter system and the building of a socialist society. Cardinal aspects of its activity are collective decision-making on all matters and collective leadership, with the congress having the most authoritative and binding say. The composition of a congress is established democratically,

i.e., by all the Communists, on the basis of a proportionate elected representation of the party organizations. Inalienable elements of democratic centralism, as the underlying principle of party building, are also the election of all leading bodies from top to bottom and their periodic accountability.

In its turn, a dialectico-materialist correlation between the party's ideological and organizational principles presupposes the recognition that there is indivisible unity between democracy and centralism as the two sides of the party's organizational structure. Conformity between organizational and ideological norms is achieved, provided such unity is in fact observed, in a flexible interdependence between democracy and centralism. From the standpoint of Marxist dialectics, no centralism is conceivable without democracy. This is, above all, because it concerns an organization with a very distinctive quality—a party of the working class, which presupposes full equality between its members and between all its organizations and rules out the superiority of any single group over another, of any directing element except the authority of collective opinion. These are universally known postulates of Marxism-Leninism. But what is quite obvious and indisputable from the standpoint of theory is not always the case in practice. This is due not only to anybody's subjective interpretation of provisions of theory or to errors, but to the actual conditions of the communist and working class movement's development.

A real contradiction between a party's ideological and organizational principles may manifest itself chiefly in the fact that *ideological* unity among a party's members is not in all cases accompanied by their similarly firm *organizational* unity. Conversely, organizational unity does not always rest on total unity of views on all matters without exception. The dynamics of this relationship should therefore be watched closely: minor ideological differences may—under some circumstances—escalate and erupt into a fullblown ideological and organizational split in the party, while organizational errors may lead to an intensification of opportunist or anarchist tendencies and ideological degeneration.

Whatever the arguments about deviations from the organizational norms of the communist movement being permissible on the pretext that these norms are not that much relevant to the movement's ideological basis or the assertions that some ideological indulgences are "harmless" and will not affect the role and organizational structure of the party, they must be approached critically. Nor is there justification for violations of the party Rules, even if it is argued that they are necessary to the leadership for surmounting differences and do not prejudice the essence of the

matter, namely, ideological-political principles. In the history of the communist movement there have been quite a few instructive examples of how and in what these departures ended: in parties prone to them a crisis situation will break out sooner or later. The link between ideological and organizational principles will then appear to be particularly self-evident and immediate, but this lesson very often proves to be belated and errors become harder to correct.

Unremitting and painstaking work is needed to preserve real unity between the party's ideological and organizational principles. This is strikingly exemplified by the struggle waged by Lenin and the Bolsheviks in the revolutionary movement of Russia. To have a profound understanding of this experience it is vital to go into the essence of Lenin's method of thought and revolutionary action.

On the theoretical and practical levels Lenin devoted colossal attention (especially in the period the party was being formed and it was winning the working class of Russia to its side) to questions related to organizational structure, to the letter of democratic centralism, seeing it as a fundamental prerequisite of the victory of the socialist revolution. Lenin saw the party's *centralized* structure and the close-knit unity of its ranks as a paramount condition of its work, of winning prestige, and establishing links to the masses. He considered that the successful implementation of its programme for structuring its ranks along the principle of democratic centralism was vital to the party's very existence. However, this in no way signified that he gave organization priority over ideological principles, that questions concerning the theoretical substantiation of aims, of intellectual unity in the party are secondary, or that one task is unrelated to the other.

Two Tendencies of the Petty-Bourgeois Approach

Steadfastly abiding by the principles of revolutionary dialectics, Lenin combatted all manifestations of a petty-bourgeois approach to questions related to the revolutionary movement's strategy and tactics, chiefly against opportunism, which is the most dangerous. But even in opportunism he distinctly discerned two forms, two tendencies of apostasy from the objectives of society's socialist reorganization.

One of these is a deviation (or deliberate departure) from the Marxist party's organizational principles while complying (at least outwardly) with the party's ideological policy guidelines and slogans. For those who represent this line, centralism is the principal

target of criticism. From their viewpoint, the party's centralized structure leads to the leadership's isolation from the rank-and-file. As they see it, a mass party, and a genuinely socialist organization should be such, must not close access to its ranks for anybody wishing to join.

Lenin distinctly traced the basic orientation of this tendency in the revolutionary movement of Russia. Renunciation of the principle of strict party commitment and the "elasticity" of the organizational requirements, on which the opponents of centralism insist, open the door for all elements of discord and vacillation, of which there are quite a few among intellectuals and even in the working class itself.

Needless to say, to deny access to the party or drastically limit the admission of working people who honestly want to join the revolutionary movement means to push the organization into a parochial framework, to lose all prospect for developing the struggle for socialism. However, it is just as dangerous, for the sake of enlisting as many members as possible to admit all who seek admission without ascertaining the qualities of the applicants. Quite obviously, the filling of the party with chance elements almost inescapably leads to a weakening of its ideological and political line, to an erosion of the purity of its principles. Fully aware of this danger, Lenin insisted on the appropriate provisions in the Rules: a member of the party can be that person who not only accepts its programme but is personally involved in the work of one of its organizations, works for the attainment of its aims and the strengthening of its prestige among the masses, strictly complies with its decisions, and abides by the single party discipline. The Leninist posture requires the formation of a party whose members do not merely register themselves as such but are admitted to one of the party's organizations.

The more widespread the title of party member, the better, argued a right-wing opportunist leader. We could only rejoice, he said, if every striker could proclaim himself a party member. But this, as Lenin pointed out, means in fact debasing the revolutionary movement to the level of "economism" and "strikism."² Further, it reduces everything to trade union activity in place of the charted programme for all-sided and conscious proletarian struggle. It is evident that the political aims defining the party's class image and its essential distinction from social-reformist parties cannot be advanced by "every striker."

Loose organizational formulas are a cover also for distrust in the working class, in its genuine revolutionary strength, and its ability for mass revolutionary actions. They are a cover for reliance on the anar-

chist, seditious sentiments in the petty-bourgeois milieu. More, this attitude is evidence that there is no clear understanding of the party's role in the class struggle.

This opportunist trend, brought to light by Lenin, is essentially as follows: it starts with rewriting the party's organizational principles and often ends up renouncing the basic revolutionary content of its activity. The erosion of the bedrock of democratic centralism emasculates the ideological content of the movement itself.

History gives us one more specimen of apostasy from the aims of the communist movement, namely, the *second tendency* that leads away from the aims of the communist movement's mainstream. This deviation begins with a retreat from the ideological principles of Marxism-Leninism, with philosophical, theoretical revisions, and leads, if it does not meet serious resistance, to the emasculation of the movement's revolutionary content. Initially, as the party's organizational creed, democratic centralism remains in most cases beyond criticism. The disagreement will be confined to this or that postulate of Marxism, to purely theoretical or even philosophical issues.

In his analysis of the experience of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP) Lenin noted that from the very beginning the differences between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks were not confined to questions of organization. Soon after the Second Congress it became quite evident that there were visible divergences also on questions related to the end goals of the class struggle, to the party's role in this struggle, to the role of the working class, and to its attitude to the other classes of capitalist society. The inner cause of the differences was the Mensheviks' covert renunciation of the party's ideological principles.

The Third RSDLP Congress, which asserted the Leninist norms and principles of party life by specifying the relevant provisions in the Rules, noted at the same time that assimilation of the ideas of revolutionary Marxism, of its entire ideological wealth, was the only correct way to unite the workers and the Communists. In this context Lenin noted that unity was a great thing but that what the working class needed was *unity among the Marxists* and not unity with the adversaries and falsifiers of Marxism. There could not be, he wrote, a strong socialist party if there was no revolutionary theory to unite all Socialists, a theory from which they drew all their commitments, a theory which they applied to their methods of struggle and work.

To defend such a theory, whose credibility is borne out by experience of the international community of communists, against unfounded attacks and against

attempts to stifle it does not mean being an enemy of a critical analysis and the development of theory. "We," Lenin wrote, "do not regard Marx's theory as something completed and inviolable; on the contrary, we are convinced that it has only laid the foundation stone of the science which socialists *must* develop in all directions if they wish to keep pace with life. We think that an *independent* elaboration of Marx's theory is especially essential for Russian socialists, for this theory provides only general *guiding* principles, which, *in particular*, are applied in England differently than in France, in France differently than in Germany, and in Germany differently than in Russia."³

What Lenin said in his day about Marxism has now acquired direct meaning also in relation to the ideas of Leninism itself. Systematic study of the actual situation in one's own country, analysis of the specifics of the class struggle in it, and enrichment of the theory of revolution and the forms and methods of organizational work with account of the experience of the international communist movement—these are all major aspects of the activity of a party that strives to express in full the aspirations of its people.

Instructive material for a study of the second trend, which we are considering, is provided by Lenin's struggle for the signing of the Brest Peace Treaty and withdrawal from the imperialist war. The situation in the party's leading bodies at the beginning of 1918 was such that on the question of a peace treaty Lenin found himself in the minority. The heart of the matter was mainly in ideological and political differences. Lenin's line was opposed by Trotsky and the so-called Left Communists, a group that suggested beginning a "revolutionary war" against imperialist Germany without delay. Although this group's stand was adventurist it was supported in that period by a number of party organizations.

However, Lenin did not see even this dramatic situation as absolutely hopeless in terms of the operation of democratic centralism. In continuing the ideological and political struggle against Trotsky and the "left" opposition he decided to appeal to *the entire party*. A crucial and urgent question such as peace had to be resolved, in his view, by the party's highest organ, by its congress.

During the preparations for the Seventh Extraordinary Congress Lenin published an article in *Pravda* under the heading of "The Revolutionary Phrase," and followed this up with a series of articles in which he compellingly showed the need for a peace treaty. His argumentation dialectically embraced the entire range of processes, links, and relationships. He opposed the demagoguery of the Left Communists with a concrete analysis of the situation, accentuating

what was central and paramount in the entire web of contradictory factors: the world's first socialist state had to be safeguarded. To sacrifice it to eloquent rhetoric meant deceiving the hopes of the working class and the peasantry, who trusted the party. Hence the need for a peaceful respite for building up the country's economic strength, reinforcing its defense capability, and creating an army. This argumentation crushed the pseudo-revolutionary phrase-mongering of the Left Communists, who refused to reckon with reality, with the obtaining historical situation, and continued to cling dogmatically to the methods of a "world revolutionary war."

Ultimately, the party's Central Committee adopted Lenin's motion for the immediate signing, despite their piratical character, of the peace terms laid down by Germany. The struggle against the "left" opposition did not end there, but the main objective was attained. The experience of grim tests of the real threat of losing all revolutionary gains, and, not least, of the persevering and energetic explanatory work among the people resulted in the party's largest organizations, one after another, adopting resolutions in support of Lenin's line, moving away from the Left Communists, and making it clear that they did not agree with the latter on the issue of the peace treaty. The triumph of Lenin's stand was definitively codified by the party's Seventh Extraordinary Congress.

A lesson of dialectics is that problems of the relationship between the party's ideological and organizational principles must be considered in all their complexity and contradictions, understanding that the crux of the matter is always not in the *form* of decision-making, not in the form of these or those actions, but in their actual *ideological content*. In this sense the question of what constitutes truth is not, needless to say, resolved by a simple majority vote. While the dialectical understanding of the revolutionary process is our guideline, we cannot discount the possibility that at some stage its content may not be entirely consistent with its form. And vice versa, the form may be fundamentally at variance with the content. For example, while the formal requirements of democratic centralism are observed there may be a departure from its ideological content.

Not always and not all members of the party are genuine Marxists. In some cases even leading posts are held by persons with remnants of bourgeois or petty-bourgeois views, by persons who have not profoundly assimilated Marxism-Leninism and have not become properly imbued with the spirit of the proletariat's class struggle. Thus, those who rely solely on the letter of democratic centralism, forgetting its ideological content and revolutionary purpose,

are taught bitter lessons by dialectics. Democratic centralism, a principle that is remarkably lucid in terms of its theory and effective in practice, is thus not only discredited in the eyes of the party rank and file but degenerates, losing its genuinely Marxist content, into a pitiful semblance of what it ought to be.

Some Lessons from the Experience of Struggle

We have considered two opportunist trends that may surface in the communist and working class movement to one extent or another. In their approach to the question of the correlation of ideological and organizational principles both conflict with the Leninist stand that there is indivisible unity between these principles and between democracy and centralism. But in considering them in their, so to speak, "pure form," it should not be forgotten that in the actual historical context such tendencies do not exist separately from one another. On the contrary, they dovetail, intertwine, and mutually complement one another. They are unquestionably "communicating vessels." Pushing along different routes, they link up, ultimately determining also the attitude to democratic centralism itself as the Communist Party's underlying form of organization.

But it would be wrong to depict opportunists as being entirely hostile to democratic centralism. When they find themselves in the minority they advocate "democracy." However, the numerical growth, that as a rule they insist upon, through an influx of ideologically and organizationally unstable elements can only intensify ideological discord and vacillation in the party and promote bureaucratic (at the top) and anarchist (among the rank and file) sentiments. The rhetoric about "democracy," about the need for a "mass" party is no more than a cover for the actual intention of diluting the party with a petty-bourgeois substrata and winning the majority with the support of such a "mass" base for consummating the party's degeneration and pushing it irrevocably onto the track of reformism.

The opportunists' hostility for democratic centralism has quite distinct boundaries. Whenever they succeeded in "taking over" the leading bodies of a party, and in enlisting the majority in its organizations to their side by devious devices, an amazing transformation occurred: it was hard to find more fervent advocates of "centralism" than its former detractors. Easily assimilating the second part of the principle (centralism) and forgetting their former ardent "fidelity" to democracy, the opportunists turned the party's organizational norms as spelled out in the Rules into a

means of imposing subjective political decisions upon the party rank and file, using democratic centralism as an integument divested of any real Marxist content.

The experience of communist and workers' parties clearly indicates that an effective preventive against these dangers is strict compliance with all the norms of democratic centralism and, at the same time, the strengthening of the ideological commitment of the Communists. Every Marxist-Leninist party is concerned about averting the danger of a minority on this or that specific issue becoming an *organized minority*. In equal measure, it seeks to avoid factionalism of another kind—the formation, the setting up of an opportunist *organized majority*.

In the revolutionary struggle, while accentuating attention either on the organizational aspect or on questions of ideologico-theoretical work, sight must not be lost of either the former or the latter aspect. This work cannot be reduced, for instance, solely to a course of lectures and to the dissemination of Marxist writings. It should involve all the members of the party in political and ideological discussions and for that reason requires the creation of the relevant conditions, giving every party member the opportunity freely to state his opinions even if some of them conflict with the views of the leadership.

In addition to general recommendations, Lenin suggested some quite concrete steps making it possible to bring the party's ideological and organizational principles into line with each other. For instance, just before the Third RSDLP Congress was held he mapped out a programme of action directed at preserving the party's unity and putting an end to factionalism, defining in this context the orientation of some specific but, in his opinion, desirable modifications in the Rules. He felt that in the prevailing circumstances it was of the utmost significance that in the Rules there should be firm guarantees of the rights and duties of party members, regardless of whether on some particular issue they were in the "majority" or the "minority." "It is necessary," he wrote in his address "To the Party" on the eve of the congress, "to include in the party Rules guarantees of the rights of any minority, so that the disagreements, dissatisfactions, and irritations that will constantly and unavoidably arise may be diverted from the old, philistine, circle channels of rows and squabbling into the still unaccustomed channels of a constitutional and dignified struggle for one's convictions."⁴ In the given situation, he noted, the preservation of unity and consistent compliance with democratic centralism would be helped by guaranteeing the rights of the minority to representation at congresses.⁵

These propositions were formulated by Lenin in a specific historical context, in keeping with the situa-

tion taking shape in the RSDLP. There is every justification for assuming that many of them remain valid and of practical value for various fraternal parties today, in a different situation.

The main thing Lenin felt was crucial to put an end once and for all to was struggles for office and clannishness, which intensify divisiveness and bureaucracy in the party and its isolation from the masses. What he advocated was by no means argument for the sake of argument but a battle of opinions that helps the workers to understand questions related to politics, to acquire a more profound comprehension of their significance, and resolve them with more determination.

While conducting extensive ideological education, the Bolsheviks made a huge effort to reinforce the party's *organizational unity*, to increase the effectiveness of democratic centralism. The experience of many parties testifies to the vast importance of this aspect of the matter, i.e., the strengthening of organizational unity even when there are some ideological divergences.

For example, during the preparations for the 15th Congress of the Communist Party of Israel in 1965 there sprang up an opportunist opposition that called in question the fundamental principles of the party's policy. The opposition was clearly in the minority, but it was nonetheless decided to publish the programme provisions of both the majority and the minority. It was only later that it became clear that this was inconsistent with the Leninist principle of democratic centralism and the party's Rules, which in a situation of this kind require the enunciation of the platform of the majority. Though this decision was meant to avoid a split in the party it was a deviation from party norms and confronted rank and file members with the alternative of choosing between the programme of group A (the Marxist-Leninist majority) and the programme of group B (the opportunist minority), but in the long run this did not prevent a split in the party.

Of course, there is a minority and a "minority," the crux of the matter lying in the sources of diverse opinions and the forms in which they are expressed. Often, in beginning a factional struggle persons holding opportunist views resort to all means to win the support of the party rank and file, circulate documents, and use even the bourgeois press for this purpose. The question is thereby moved out of the bounds of inner-party democracy and degenerates to the level of petty-bourgeois, anarchistic practice, which is totally impermissible for the Communists. Matters related to the life of a party must be settled at the party level, and nothing can justify helping the bourgeois propaganda to interfere in party affairs, to

judge them from a standpoint that has nothing in common with a Marxist view.

The experience of the Communist Party of India shows that in defining a correct course of action it is of the utmost importance to work out clear-cut ideological criteria for assessing it and chart the rules for holding party discussions. Of course, various opinions on this or that issue must be taken into consideration. All of them must be respectfully and scrupulously examined. Democratic centralism is a mechanism not only of party debates but also of decision-making, of defining the ideological and political course, of taking a party unitedly into action, of expressing the will of the party rank and file.

This aspect of democratic centralism—the strength of the party rank and file, the opinion and will of the Communists, the role of local organizations in deciding cardinal issues of party policy—is very topical indeed under present-day conditions. Lenin constantly spoke of the need for keeping rank and file members informed of the state of affairs in the party leadership, of everything that concerned the party's life. He regarded unity as the affair of, in fact, every party member, more, of every class-conscious worker.

Lenin expressed his confidence in the party's collective mind with extraordinary power: "*More light!*—let the Party know *everything*," he wrote, "let it have *all, absolutely all the material* required for a judgement of all and sundry differences, reversions to revisionism, departures from discipline, etc. More confidence in the independent judgement of the whole body of party workers!—they, and they alone, will be

able to curb the excessive hotheadedness of grouplets inclined to splits,...to imbue them with 'good will' to observe party discipline,...to cool the ardour of anarchistic individualism...."⁶

* * *

Lenin's theoretical heritage and the experience of the fraternal parties bear out that nobody can be a consistent Marxist if he rejects democratic centralism as the party's organizational principle. Similarly, it is inconceivable for a person who distorts the theoretical content of the doctrine of Marx, Engels and Lenin to go on regarding himself an adherent of democratic centralism. The Communists cannot sacrifice fundamental provisions of the theory that are the foundation of ideological and political unity of thought, much less use an organizational form to camouflage the absence of a firm Marxist-Leninist stand. The guarantee that each fraternal party fulfills its leading political role in the struggle for peace, democracy and social progress lies in unity between the ideological and organizational principles guiding the Communists.

Reference Notes:

1. V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 7, p.387
 2. *Ibid.*, p.261
 3. *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, pp. 211-212
 4. *Ibid.*, Vol. 7, p.460.
 5. *Ibid.*, pp. 460-461.
 6. *Ibid.*, p. 116.
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Political Offer from the Democratic Revolutionary Front and the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front to Diverse Social Sectors to Search for a Political Solution To the Conflict

The Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front/Democratic Revolutionary Front (FMLN/FDR) issued a far-reaching new peace proposal on July 10, 1986. The proposal calls on all social sectors of the Salvadoran people to take an active part in discussion and dialogue leading to a political settlement of the conflict gripping that country.

The FMLN/FDR's bold and flexible new peace initiative reflects the political and military initiative held by the popular forces in El Salvador. The cornerstone of the Reagan administration's counter-revolutionary strategy—the effort to portray Salvadoran president José Napoleón Duarte as a reform-oriented democrat while pursuing a policy of brutal repression and mass austerity—is in shambles. Duarte is discredited, and broader and broader sectors of the Salvadoran people are taking up active struggle for peace and genuine national independence. The FMLN/FDR is aggressively trying to develop channels for these sectors' participation in formulating a political settlement, while the Duarte regime and the U.S. are on the defensive and trying to stonewall any serious process of dialogue.

The new peace proposal is central to this effort, and is expected to be the springboard for intensive political agitation and organizing within El Salvador over the coming period. Likewise, it will be a weapon international solidarity forces can use to demonstrate the FMLN/FDR's commitment to democracy and work to isolate the anti-popular, interventionist policy of the Reagan administration. For these reasons the July 10 proposal of the FMLN/FDR is reprinted here in full.

I. INTRODUCTION

Salvadoran society is the victim of a prolonged

economic, political and social crisis which has deepened and become more evident throughout these six years of war.

In 1984, the government of Mr. Duarte presented itself as an alternative solution to the national crisis. Its two years of government have resulted in more war, greater surrender of national sovereignty to the interests of the Reagan administration, higher inflation, higher taxes, higher unemployment, greater misery, more lives lost, and greater destruction. Reality has shown that the Christian Democrat Government cannot overcome the present situation of crisis.

For many years, the organizations grouped around the FDR/FMLN have struggled to provide a way out of the crisis, combining political and military means. For over five years, we have insisted in the need of a political solution to the conflict, and we have shown that—in spite of the increasing involvement of the might of the North American military in El Salvador—the FMLN cannot be militarily defeated.

The dialogue with the government, initiated at La Palma, was unilaterally suspended by the government, and its upcoming renewal seems to respond more to an attempt by the regime to slightly recuperate its deteriorated political image, than to a serious effort to achieve a politically negotiated solution to the conflict.

On the other hand, it is evident that a process of regrouping of social forces in the country is taking place. This regrouping has as a common characteristic the search for ways to solve the present national crisis. Each day it is more evident and understood that without resolving the national conflict a recuperation will not be possible. For this reason diverse sectors search for an alternative which would permit them to make their necessary contribution towards the coun-

try's reconstruction.

The FDR/FMLN are conscious of this situation and perceive in Salvadoran society a push towards a national consensus which would serve as a base for peace with justice and dignity for all Salvadorans. We also perceive the development of an increasing will—among and by Salvadorans—to build the solution to the national crisis, to start being the true masters of what has always been ours: El Salvador.

Based upon these considerations, the FDR/FMLN present to the country the following political proposal. For its elaboration, we have taken into account a set of opinions and aspirations which have been expressed to us in recent months. We have also taken into account our analysis of the national problems. But, above all, we are guided by the interests of the Salvadoran people as a whole. We do not pretend to have the absolute truth. Quite the contrary, in this opportunity we present our contribution to what we intend to be a broad national debate.

Our proposal is responsible and flexible. Responsible because of the FDR/FMLN's firm will to comply with the contents of the proposal, to commit ourselves to the solutions that the national dialogue may bring. Flexible because we do not consider our proposal the "final word" of the FDR/FMLN. It is rather a contribution to a discussion and the building of a national consensus which should express the plurality of opinions and positions which characterize our society. Therefore, several of the proposals we put forward are not fully elaborated, since we believe that should be done through frank and open dialogue.

The experience of the past two years shows that the dialogue between the government and our Fronts—in spite of the fact that it is a widespread hope of the population—is extremely precarious given that the government has interrupted it for the past 19 months.

We are still convinced of the need for dialogue between the parties in conflict, but we are also conscious of its limitations and insufficiencies. That is why, since the first meeting in La Palma, the FDR/FMLN has stated the necessity of incorporating all the sectors of the country into the process of finding a political solution.

With the presentation of this proposal to all political and social forces of the country—without exclusion—our Fronts take another step toward the building of a national dialogue. We hope that this step will serve as the necessary lever to move the country to a new stage of reconstruction, and of social, political and economic progress. If the future of the country belongs to all, all of us must contribute to the political solution.

II. STATEMENT

The Democratic Revolutionary Front and the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front, before the Salvadoran people and the world, state:

- (1) We are willing to participate in a national dialogue with all forces and sectors interested in a patriotic and democratic political solution to our country's conflict, in order to conquer the peace with justice and dignity which the people desire.
- (2) We commit ourselves to dialogue with all sectors, regardless of social, political or ideological differences. This includes civilian or military sectors truly interested in elaborating a project for a political solution and in struggling to make it a reality.
- (3) We are ready to commit ourselves to the political project of national consensus—patriotic and democratic—which will be elaborated in this broad dialogue.

III. FOUNDATIONS OF OUR COMMITMENT

1. Solution Among Salvadorans
 - 1.1 The solution must be sought and agreed upon among Salvadorans.
 - 1.2 The solution must completely restore national sovereignty and independence. This is the only way to guarantee to the people the freedom to exercise the right of self-determination and of democracy in order to decide their own destiny. Concretely, this means that the government of the United States must remove itself from the national conflict and cease its military and political participation in the same.
 - 1.3 The solution should guarantee the nonalignment, or the non-participation in any military alliance with other countries or military blocs, of our country. Neither will there be a predetermined political alignment with other countries or powers, except in matters of world peace, disarmament and the unity in defense of common Latin American interests.
2. Amplitude and Pluralism of the Government
 - 2.1 The political solution must be the result of a pluralistic participation both in its elaboration and in the struggle to make it succeed. The system of government which results from this solution should also be a guarantee

of political and ideological pluralism.

- 2.2 In order to assure and guarantee compliance with the terms of the political solution, the government should be reorganized, integrating representatives of all the sectors through their parties, organizations, personalities and other forms of representation. Only those sectors who do not want a political solution will exclude themselves from participation in the reorganized government.
 - 2.3 There are those sectors who, while in favor of a political solution, sympathize and adhere to the ideological influence of the United States. We respect this right. The right of other sectors to have their own political ideology and to democratically struggle for it should also be respected.
 - 2.4 The broad participation in the government of all the sectors will be a guarantee that the agreements of the dialogue for the solution of the national crisis are respected. The FDR/FLMN will be one of the components of the government.
 - 2.5 The government would have a transitional character and would complete the basic tasks defined in the formulation of the political solution. Among these tasks would be the holding of free and fair general elections in which the people could decide what route to follow and who should be in power.
 - 2.6 We aspire to be in power; this is a legitimate goal for which we struggle. Under conditions of a just political solution—and in accordance with the conditions for free and fair elections—we will participate in such elections. This would re-establish the process which was corrupted by the dictatorship, which in turn compelled the beginning of a just and legitimate revolutionary war. This war will undoubtedly continue if the government of the United States succeeds in obstructing a political solution.
 - 2.7 The government which would result from such elections should take firm and energetic action in order to end corruption, to initiate a process of cleaning up the government, and to create an honest administration, especially at higher levels.
3. Cease-Fire After the Reorganization of the Government
 - 3.1 In order to contribute to the government's fulfillment of the agreed upon measures of the political solution, there should be a cease-fire.

- 3.2 The FDR/FLMN commit themselves to agree to a cease-fire upon the installation of this government as well as to contribute to the creation and maintenance of the conditions necessary for the realization of the terms of the political solution.

- 3.3 Once the cease-fire is declared, the FMLN will maintain its army and arms, the government's armed forces will also remain organized and armed. A negotiated solution to the existence of two armies will be looked for within the framework of the transitional government. The FLMN commits itself to participating in good faith in those negotiations.

4. Beginning a Just Economic System

The political solution must have a measure of social justice and respect for the economic interests of all the sectors patriotically committed to it. In view of this fact, the transitional government must apply the following measures:

- 4.1 Repeal the measures of the "economic package" which hurts the interests of the majority.
 - 4.2 Put into effect fundamental reforms, principally in the areas of agriculture, banking and foreign trade, to be specified during the course of the national dialogue. The agrarian reform must resolve the problem of the land in favor of the majority of the workers and the small and medium-sized farmers.
 - 4.3 Formulate a program of economic reactivation to initiate a solution to the problem of unemployment and a fair distribution of the wealth.
 - 4.4 Respect the right of private property and free enterprise of all those who commit themselves to a political solution, with limitations derived from the program of reform.
 - 4.5 Develop a mixed economic system which combines, in different ways, free enterprise and private property with state and social enterprise and property.
5. Democracy and the Re-establishment of Human Rights

The political solution must begin an authentic process of democratization and a process of the re-establishment and respect for human rights which would guarantee:

- 5.1 An end to the repression and to the violation of human rights in all its forms.
- 5.2 The effective dismantling of the repressive apparatus which violates human rights.
- 5.3 The return of the displaced and refugee populations to their places of origin.
- 5.4 The absolute respect of all the democratic freedoms and rights, both individual and collective.
- 5.5 The creation of structural and political conditions for the holding of free and fair general elections, and the practical organization of the elections.

6. Foreign Policy of Peace

- 6.1 The transitional government should assure a regional policy of peace, non-intervention, self-determination and independence. It should, as well, encourage political solutions to the Central American conflicts, support detente among nations and develop sovereign relations with all states, based on our social interest.

- 6.2 Must encourage friendly relations of mutual collaboration with the United States based on equal rights and mutual respect for the sovereignty and independence.

A great feeling of responsibility for the people and for the whole nation encourages us in the formulation of the present declaration. In assuming our responsibility in the promotion of a fruitful national dialogue, we put forward these proposals as our contribution, offering them as a base upon which to discuss and construct the political solution which could offer a way out of the profound national crisis. We are sure that with the contribution of all sectors committed to the goal of a just, democratic and independent peace, the political solution will be obtained.

We reiterate our will for peace and our confidence in the capacity for struggle of our people which has been demonstrated in the course of the war. We also express our unyielding decision to continue the struggle in the event a North American intervention blocks the political solution desired by our people and our Fronts.

Executive Committee
Democratic Revolutionary Front, FDR

General Command
Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front, FMLN

El Salvador, July 10, 1986

Correspondence

As mentioned in the introduction to "Features and Conditions of the U.S. Working Class" in the last issue of Notes, that article constituted the initial working paper of the Study Project on the U.S. Working Class, an initiative launched in August, 1985 whose work is currently in progress. Because of the importance of this theoretical undertaking, we hope to make discussion and debate concerning its hypotheses and findings an ongoing feature of Notes. Concretely, we hope to publish both contributions from readers as well as articles and updates from the project as they are developed. The first two letters in this Correspondence section initiate this process; we invite other comrades to make contributions for future issues.

WORKING CLASS STRATIFICATION

I found the article "Features and Conditions of the U.S. Working Class" in *Notes* #2 very useful. After reading it, I went back to try to summarize some of the empirical work I did two or three years ago when I made an initial effort to quantify our analysis of the labor aristocracy and the working class. [The letter-writer was co-author of the series on the labor aristocracy which appeared in *Line of March* #11, #12, and #13/14.—Ed.]

That effort used statistics from the Department of Labor and the Census Bureau. It had two goals: to illustrate the size of the labor aristocracy and other strata of the working class (lower and middle), and to roughly show the expansion and contraction of these categories since the end of World War II. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to complete this work, but I think it might be useful to indicate to *Notes* readers how I approached the problem. I don't have much of a statistical background, so my goal was simply to highlight rough trends. Also, I'm sure I made numerous conceptual errors, both in qualitative and quantitative

analysis; nevertheless, I think this analysis is in the ballpark.

First, my starting point was the concept of average value of labor power mentioned in the *Notes* article. In the absence of a Marxist empirical analysis of this concept in the U.S. in the present period, I relied on the Department of Labor's family budget categories, which are supposed to be rough estimates, based on current prices, of what is required to support an urban working family of four at various standards of living. The Department of Labor has formulated four major categories: a higher-level budget, an intermediate budget, a modest but adequate lower budget, and a poverty-line determination. I used the intermediate budget as a very rough estimate of what is required to maintain an urban nuclear family of four at the historically determined subsistence level. When you examine what actually goes into this budget in the way of allowances for housing, food, transportation, etc., it is quite barebones. In 1970, for example, this category was \$10,664. The lower budget was \$6,960 and the high budget was \$15,511. The poverty line that year was about \$4,000. I focused on 1970, because it represented approximately the high point of US. post-war prosperity.

To determine lower strata, middle strata, and upper strata, I had to determine limits. This was obviously not a precise determination, but a rough demarcation. Since the lower budget was actually incredibly frugal, I placed the lower strata demarcation in 1970 at \$8,000. I placed the demarcation for the labor aristocracy near the high budget at \$15,000. (It should actually be somewhat lower.) The middle strata was then located at \$8,001 to \$14,999.

The Census Bureau provides annual statistics on annual income of families with heads in the experienced civilian labor force, broken down by occupation and race of head. Annual income is much more

reliable than wages for our purposes, since it also indicates something about employment stability. By applying the lines of demarcation to this set of statistics, it is possible to arrive at an extremely rough first approximation of the number of families in each category. However, these statistics combine working class families with those of other classes. To arrive at a more accurate approximation, bourgeois, petty bourgeois, and "middle strata" (following what is now the norm in the international communist movement, this is used in the sense of non-working class managerial and professional employees) families must be subtracted. It is once again possible to make a rough determination by subtracting such categories as "self-employed," as well as managerial, professional, and sales families above a certain income level. (For 1970, I made the fairly arbitrary determination that families in these particular categories with incomes over \$25,000 were non-working class.)

My rough results were as follows for the working class stratification in 1970:

CHART A

Upper Strata Families	7,613,000	(20.5%)	
Middle Strata Families	18,085,000	(48.7%)	
Lower Strata Families	11,415,000	(30.8%)	
Total Working Class Families:	37,113,000	(100.0%)	(90.1%)
Non-Working Class Families in all income levels:	4,056,000		(9.9%)
Total Families:	4,1169,000		(100.0%)

When I applied the same analysis to Black families in 1970, I came up with the following:

CHART B

Upper Strata Families	325,000	(9.3%)	
Middle Strata Families	1,206,000	(34.6%)	
Lower Strata Families	1,957,000	(56.1%)	
Total Black Working Class Families:	3,488,000	(100.0%)	(97.7%)
Non-Working Class Black Families in all income levels:	82,000		(2.3%)
Total Black Families:	3,570,000		(100.0%)

Three significant factors are noticeable for Black families: (1) The Black working class is majority lower strata; (2) the Black middle strata is not insignificant; and (3) non-working class families are few and far between.

Also, if we look at the figures for Black families as a percentage of total families in the various categories, we find some interesting data. Blacks represent only 4.3% of upper strata working class families, but 17.1% of lower strata working class families.

To determine an even more accurate approximation, it must be recognized that relying on the census

statistics for families with heads in the civilian labor force is misleading. What is left out of this category are two major groupings: non-related households with at least one adult member in the civilian labor force, and families and non-related households with no adults in the civilian labor force during the entire year. Obviously, if we were to integrate these two categories into our analysis, the lower strata would grow conspicuously larger. Even so, the figures above give at least a rough picture of the working class stratification in 1970.

To continue, using census data it is also possible to estimate how occupational and industrial categories break down into the classifications above. There is also census data for incomes of families with heads of households in unions for 1970 and 1980, so it should be possible to make a very rough estimate about the stratification internal to the organized labor movement. Unfortunately, I didn't have time to pursue this inquiry in any great detail, except for the illustration below.

This is a rough occupational breakdown of the labor aristocracy in 1970 for families with heads in the civilian labor force (once again based on the procedures outlined above):

CHART C

Total Upper Strata Families	7,613,000
Professional and Technical	1,697,000
Engineers	484,000
Teachers	172,000
Managers and Administrators	1,310,000
Sales Workers	684,000
Clerical Workers	544,000
Craftsmen, Foremen, etc.	1,591,000
Construction Craftsmen	391,000
Mechanics (Non-Auto)	200,000
Operatives (Non-Transport)	584,000
Durable Goods Manufacturing	316,000
Transport Equipment Operatives	293,000
Non-Farm Laborers	157,000
Service Workers	322,000
Protective Service Workers	139,000

If we were to try to combine these various categories and stuff them into our division of the labor aristocracy into "Yuppies" (the proletarianized petty bourgeoisie, largely in the technical/professional sectors), skilled trades, and the better positioned workers for monopoly capital and governments, many of whom are unionized, we end up with the following super rough breakdown:

CHART D

"Yuppies"	3,519,000	(46.2%)
Skilled trades	1,591,000	(20.9%)
Monopoly & govt. workers	2,503,000	(32.9%)

I suspect in reality this is off due to the way I played with the statistics. A share of the "Yuppies" probably belong more in the government work category and some should more accurately be placed in the non-working class sections of the population. In addition, a share of the skilled trades and higher income operatives that I placed in the working class middle strata probably deserve to be placed in the labor aristocracy. In any case, you can get a general picture of the working class structure.

Finally, I want to deal with the issue of the expansion/contraction of the different strata of the working class. A statistical analysis using the methods outlined above is fairly difficult given changing requirements of working class subsistence which figures into the average value of labor power, as well as inflation. Nevertheless, I made a stab at trying to analyze this development over time.

I used a method employed by the Bureau of Census itself. In one of its reports on annual income levels, the census folks took the Department of Labor's intermediate income level for a year in the early 1970s and then projected backwards using constant dollars to adjust for inflation. Their point was to show the massive expansion of families and households with annual incomes over the intermediate income level since 1950.

I simply looked at the number of working class families and households below and above the intermediate budget line (average value of labor power). Unlike the analysis above, I made an attempt to incorporate non-related households and families without an adult in the labor force. Once again, the figures are incredibly rough, but they are useful for showing general trends which accompanied the expansion and contraction of the U.S. economy in the post-war period. It does highlight our point, however, that the labor aristocracy and middle strata objectively expanded with the expansion of U.S. imperialism, and has declined somewhat in the last decade.

The percentage has probably increased since the recession year of 1983, but not significantly. Once again, more precise analysis would contribute to our understanding of objective trends in the structure and conditions of different strata of the working class.

CHART E

Year	Total Working Class Families	No. Above Intermediate Budget	Percent
1952	33 million	3 million	9%
1962	39 million	9 million	23%
1972	47 million	20 million	43%
1981	54 million	20 million	37%
1983	55 million	18 million	33%

I hope you find this information useful. I think it suggests, at a very crude level, a general approach to empirical analysis of the working class using the statistics available from the state. A scientific analysis would of course have to be much more rigorous about concepts, as well as dealing much more carefully and expertly with the statistical material. For example, I based my work above on national data. However, we don't live in a homogeneous country; there are conspicuous differences in income levels between regions, and between large cities and rural areas. For instance, California and Illinois have much higher family income levels than most southern states. Indeed, you won't find much of a labor aristocracy in a place like Mississippi if we determine it by the national data above, but you would probably find a huge gap between the Black lower strata and the white middle strata, and the Mississippi middle strata itself functions like the labor aristocracy in the northern cities. So, obviously, these aggregate numbers have some use, but they can also hide many important phenomena which have political implications.—*Bob Seltzer*

INDUSTRIAL PROLETARIAT

After having read the article "Features and Conditions of the U.S. Working Class" in the last issue of *Notes*, I am left with one important question. What happened to the industrial proletariat and the concept of class stratification based on the degree of socialization in the process of production? These are concepts that have been central to the political and organizational policies of the communist movement, particularly since the advent of Bolshevism and the successful socialist revolution in the Soviet Union.

The essential purpose of making a concrete analysis of the stratifications in the U.S. working class is to be able to determine precisely where we can expect the revolutionary doctrine of Marxism-Leninism to take root and find expression in the arena of political action and revolutionary organization. Given the fact that many comrades have developed a one-sided,

subjective tendency to "mystify" the lower strata and effectively take the view that the "most oppressed are the most revolutionary," it would seem more important than ever not to give a one-sided stress in our analysis to the stratification of the working class based mainly on wage levels.

The analysis of the labor aristocracy is quite important and enormously useful in clarifying the political motion and dynamics of the working class movement in the U.S., especially in the post-World War II era. However, analyzing political motion during a particular historical period and determining, in strategic terms, the most critical strata of the working class in relation to building a revolutionary movement, overthrowing the bourgeoisie and constructing a socialist society are not necessarily the same thing. Because certain sectors of the industrial proletariat have been targeted by the bourgeoisie and for a period pacified by a steadily rising standard of living does not solve for us the problem of identifying the vanguard sector of the revolutionary process in the U.S. In reality the bourgeoisification of a portion of the industrial proletariat greatly complicates the problem. However, I have serious difficulties with the theoretical and political implication that the industrial proletariat is no longer able to play a vanguard role. As a result of such an erroneous conclusion we could altogether liquidate the category of socialization of production in our analysis of class stratification and thereby not only distort reality but also vulgarize what has been an important contribution to the theoretical development of the U.S. communist movement, that is, resuscitating the concept of the labor aristocracy and the perspective that the struggle against opportunism is central to developing the workers' movement.

In "What the Friends of the People Are," Lenin went so far as to write: "This position of the factory worker in the general system of capitalist relations makes him the sole fighter for the emancipation of the working class, for only the higher stage of development of capitalism, large-scale machine industry, creates the material conditions and the social forces necessary for this struggle. . ." In numerous other instances Lenin emphasized the role of socialized production, concentrated and cooperative labor, as the material basis for both socialist consciousness and *revolutionary organization*, that is, the party. It was for this reason that in building the Bolshevik Party the slogan "Make Every Factory Our Fortress" became a guiding principle of Bolshevik political work.

After the Russian Revolution and the creation of the Third International, during the period in which Lenin developed his theoretical breakthroughs on the

relation between opportunism and the development of a labor aristocracy in the capitalist countries, the parties of the Communist International, under the leadership of the Bolsheviks, were confronted by the task of reorganizing themselves on the basis of the factory as opposed to the electoral districts, the most common form of organization in the Second International. The factory cell became the basic unit of party organization and was charged with the responsibility of actually fusing communism with the working class movement. Deeper into the proletariat did not mean a turning away from the socialized sectors of the work force to the poorest working class communities; it meant shifting the base of the party's work, in the framework of the most socialized sectors, from the upper strata of skilled workers in big industry to the production and service workers in these same factories.

In the U.S. today the most socialized and usually the most organized sectors of the working class, workers in auto, steel, mining, chemicals, electronics, transportation, communications, health and public service, are themselves subject to a process of stratification. The power of class collaboration in these unions rests, not on the fact that the entire work force has been brought into the labor aristocracy, but that significant sectors of the rank and file have been, and thus provide a firm social base for opportunism. Yet in each of these industries there are middle and lower strata workers. For example, in the auto industry there are sizeable numbers of workers, outside of the Big Three, who make less than \$4 per hour. Moreover, hundreds of thousands of auto workers in the parts sector are unorganized. And of course in all of these important unions there are concentrations of Black, Latino and women workers who do not constitute part of the labor aristocracy. Socialized production organizes the workers as a class, concentrates them, and more than anywhere else in capitalist society, integrates them across racial, national and gender lines.

While some of these themes are mentioned in the article "Features and Conditions of the U.S. Working Class," the centrality of the industrial proletariat, in strategic terms, is nowhere reaffirmed or even discussed. It is for this reason that I raise the question of the role of the industrial proletariat in the U.S. revolution. If a revision of this basic tenet of Marxism-Leninism is being proposed, it would be preferable to do so openly and straightforwardly.—Bruce Bodner

COMMUNISTS RAISING CHILDREN

I believe that the section on communists having and raising children in the article "Ideological Struggle Against Petty Bourgeois Individualism" in *Notes* #2

had some very serious problems.

I recognize that the main purpose of the article was not to develop a comprehensive viewpoint on the issue of communists as parents. It was to take up a struggle, and a necessary one, against petty bourgeois deviations in our ranks. But in taking up this struggle in regard to parents and children, an implicit line was present. And it is a wrong one.

The article's standpoint toward communists having children is one I would characterize as "detached neutrality." Perhaps this is in an effort to avoid glamorizing the bourgeois nuclear family, which is understandable. Or perhaps it is an attempt to avoid the implication that individuals who don't have or don't want to have children are somehow "abnormal," which is also a worthy aim. But in trying to take these (or other) things into account, the article swings far away from materialism.

The fact is that the majority of the working class does want to and will have children. And as the communist movement is fused more and more with the working class, this will also apply to communists. What's more, this is not something a communist organization should be neutral toward. Having children isn't a "matter of personal choice" (as the article puts it) in the sense that having, say, a stereo set or a VCR is: "If you want one, fine, if you don't, that's fine, too."

Yes, the decision to have children is a personal one, in that the communist movement gives no directives on the matter and has no higher or lower opinion of any activist based upon their individual decision. But in a broader social sense, a communist organization must see having children as a collective part of working class life and a positive one at that. This standpoint reflects our collective optimism about the future, and has nothing in common with the individualistic manner in which the petty bourgeoisie wants "only the best" for their individual children.

The failure of the article to have a correct general stance on this issue is reflected in many of the particular points. Among the specific errors made, probably the most glaring is the assertion that children of communists are not forced to make any qualitative sacrifices because their parents are activists. The article puts it in this way:

"While the lives of the children of active communists will not be the ideal projected under bourgeois standards, as their parents are often tied up in political work, we do not believe this constitutes a 'sacrifice' by the children except by the standards of the petty bourgeoisie. For whatever strain the activity of the parents of these children causes is compensated by the quality of their social/cultural surroundings. And having parents who are active in the communist

movement affords children a far greater protection from abuse, hostility, hunger, exposure to drugs and alcoholism and alienation which a large portion of children in this country are subject to."

Now, it is true that relative to having parents who are unconscious of, or insensitive to, the pressures on youth regarding violence, drugs, etc., children of communists tend to have some compensation for the time their parents put into political work. It is also true that children of communists are exposed to adults who have a generally better attitude and practice toward these matters than the societal average. But it is twisting logic to use these facts to deny the sacrifices children of activists make.

First of all, the pressures toward drug abuse, alcoholism, violence and alienation are ever-present in society. One of the worst features of present-day U.S. capitalism is that the institutions which should combat these pressures—schools, neighborhoods, recreational centers—are falling apart, especially in poor and minority neighborhoods. In that context, it is an additional burden on the parents to make up for what is missing in the country's social organization. One of the major concerns of many working class parents, in fact, is how to keep their children away from the drug/violence/alcohol pressures that surround them every day.

Communists do understand that long range the key to resolving this is social revolution. But we don't live only in the long range. And in the short range, it is absolutely true that the time taken away from attention to children for political work makes for real gaps in what attention and guidance can be provided for children. The paper's whole comparison is false. The point isn't to compare parents who have communist consciousness with the "average consciousness" in the working class; it's to compare the situation of children with conscious parents who put more time into their children versus those who put less. And with this criterion, it's ridiculous to say that the children of those who put in less time make no sacrifices.

This is even more true when we look at the present level of maturity of our organization and the level of general communist fusion with the working class. The article's arguments would ring more true if we were at the point where we had a network of communist-led youth organizations for all ages; if we had youth summer camps and other such institutions; if in each city there were whole neighborhoods where communist influence was strong and there was a broad social circle of youth whose parents were in the communist movement's orbit; if there were mechanisms and trained, accessible personnel to deal with the many specific problems youth face as they grow up. But

these things don't exist right now, for Line of March or the U.S. communist movement more broadly. Under these circumstances, it is pure idealism to assert that children of communists make no sacrifices.

Further, as the article correctly points out, there are times when political work demands major alterations in the lives of parent activists. They may have to change jobs, move into a different neighborhood, relocate to another city, take a temporary assignment where they cannot bring their children. When these things happen, it affects the children involved. And a particular problem is that, because of a child's age if nothing else, he/she often cannot understand *why* the change is being made. Children can and do adapt to these things, but to say it is not a sacrifice is simply incorrect. What's more, if the organization holds to that line, we will have a harder time convincing parent activists to make these changes when they are politically required. It is one thing to make an alteration in your life if you recognize that other comrades know a sacrifice is involved; it is quite another if the leadership's line is: this is no big deal, and it's no sacrifice for the children. Taking such a line will not strengthen the working class outlook of our activists, it will only fuel resentments that will come back to haunt us later.

I want to make it crystal clear that I am not defending the me-firstism and pampering of children that does emanate from some activists of more privileged class backgrounds. In putting on the agenda the

difficult and sensitive task of struggling with such backward views, the article did make a contribution. But the bulk of problems are actually experienced by the children of comrades who are further down the class ladder. And it's exactly these comrades who have to put some extra time into their children's care—because they go to the worst schools, live in the worst neighborhoods, etc. And the attention is not to make sure the child grows up to be a doctor or lawyer or professor—but to make sure he or she stays out of the juvenile hall or worse.

I do not believe that our organization will be able to seriously address the problems of these activists unless there is some modification in the approach to communists having and raising children posed in the "Ideological Struggle" article. Petty bourgeois individualism regarding communist parenting must be combated, but it cannot be effectively defeated by a non-materialist line that ignores the broader social context within which this struggle takes place. Quite the contrary, such an approach will only strengthen those backward tendencies, giving them ammunition to enlist working class activists with children under an individualistic banner.

I believe we can do better than this. I'd like to see more discussion in *Notes*, or elsewhere, with the objective of getting us on a sounder track.—Gary Achziger.