

Proletarian Unity League

2, 3, Many Parties of a New Type? Against the Ultra-Left Line

Chapter 4: "Left" Opportunism in Political Line A. "Left" Opportunism on the Reform Struggle

Based on their analysis that the bourgeoisie can no longer grant "real reforms" and that therefore participation in the reform struggle essentially bogs down the proletariat, wide sections of the communist movement have embraced an ultra-left conception of the relationship between the reform struggle and the fight for proletarian power. Pursuit of unattainable reforms, they contend, will not only sidetrack the working class but, by spreading the illusion these reforms can be won under capitalism, will in fact corrupt it. Worse yet, where the bourgeoisie appears to grant some concessions (in reality quite imaginary), it will do so to lull the working class to sleep, to "straitjacket" it, so as to "usher in fascism." (see in particular analyses of WVO and RWL; for example their joint leaflet, "Raise Struggle Against All Bourgeois Illusions"). Behind the "left" suspicion of any involvement in the reform struggle lies a romantic notion of the instinctively revolutionary character of the proletariat. In practice, this leads to opposition to revolutionary work **within** the reform struggle and instead to attempts to set up shop along-side it. The "Left-Wing" of our movement thereby abandons the main training ground for the working class in a pre-revolutionary period.

The "left" opposition to the reform struggle has its ideological source in the different varieties of anarchism (anarcho-syndicalism, anarcho-communism). The essence of anarchism lies, theoretically, in its rejection of any **political** struggle for state power, and tactically, in its hostility to the **political** struggle generally, both for democratic reform and revolution.

"An anarchist will have nothing to do with "parliamentarianism" since it only lulls the proletariat to sleep. He will have none of "reforms," since reforms are but so many compromises with the possessing classes. He wants the revolution, a "full, complete, immediate and immediately economic" revolution... Bakunin objects to the working class lending a hand in any movement whose object is the obtaining or the extension of political rights. In condemning such movements as "bourgeois," he fancies himself a tremendous revolutionist." (Plekhanov, **Anarchism and Socialism**, pp. 134-35, 97)¹

Against the political struggle in any form, the anarchist or the anarcho-syndicalist militates for the economic organization of the working class. These organizations, he believes, will replace what he calls "statist" forms of rule. The anarcho-syndicalist Rudolf Rocker explains:

"They [the supporters of Bakunin] believed that the workers International was destined gradually to gather all effective workers into its ranks [i.e., as a trade union does: our note] and at the proper time to overthrow the **economic** despotism of the possessing classes, and along with this all the political coercive institutions of the capitalist state...." (**Anarcho-Syndicalism, p. 76**)

When the exaggeration of the economic struggle proceeds from the "Left," it draws on these anarchist sources. This "left" exaggeration of the economic struggle, and the consequent opposition to the fight for reforms and democracy, is known as "left" or imperialist economism.

Because the political lines and assumptions of so many communist organizations are shot through with a "left" economist bias, "left" opportunism on the reform struggle deserves a far more extended treatment than we can give it here. We will take up a few of its basic features, mainly using the example of the Workers Viewpoint Organization.

The "left" position on reforms implicitly if not explicitly rests on the discovery of a very new period in the development of capitalism, one in which bourgeois democracy has no more place.

"Bourgeois democracy went through three phases. First, in the fight against feudalism, it was revolutionary; it ceased to be revolutionary as capitalism grew. Now, in its last stage, bourgeois democracy is thoroughly reactionary and it becomes the best 'shell' of bourgeois rule. Under parasitic, decaying and moribund capitalism, bourgeois democracy's main role is to contain the proletarian struggle, to straitjacket it. Thus, it has been transformed into its opposite." (**WV, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 28**)

Or, as the comrades of the MLOC say, "After the emergence of monopoly capitalism, the material base for bourgeois democracy ceased to exist." (**Unite!, Feb.-April 1976**) These views obviously carry grave implications for the fight for democracy and reform under capitalism, and even more sharply, for the fight against fascism:

"**The transition from bourgeois democracy to fascism**, which is no qualitative movement, but **quantitative**, since in the age of imperialism, "The difference between the democratic-republican and reactionary

monarchistic bourgeoisie is obliterated precisely because they are both rotting alive." (Lenin, CW 23, p. 106) There exists no difference between the bourgeois imperialist state and the ruthless, vicious oppressiveness of czarist autocracy." (**Ibid.**)

And the entire thrust of WVO's analysis--that bourgeois democracy "strait-jackets" the proletariat and thus assists the so-called "fascization process"--points to a conclusion which spokesperson Jerry Tung has made explicit: "we cannot counterpose bourgeois democracy and fascism by saying one is better than the other." (Speech at a Boston forum, Fall 1975)

This view of bourgeois democracy will find no support in Marxism or reality. The "third period" revealed to WVO has no substance whatsoever: **bourgeois democracy remains** revolutionary in relationship to feudalism, but this has **never** meant that the **bourgeoisie** would conduct revolutionary struggle against feudal classes in every situation (we need only look at Marx and Engels' analysis of the German bourgeoisie, or Lenin's of the Russian). This confusion of bourgeois democracy with the bourgeoisie extends to WVO's conception of the proletariat's relationship to both. Bourgeois democracy of the parliamentary or constitutionalist types has always provided and still provides the best form of bourgeois rule under capitalism for the development of the proletariat's revolutionary struggle. It also has provided and still provides the most stable form of bourgeois rule for the development of capitalism.² But no Marxist, including Marx, has ever claimed that the bourgeoisie would voluntarily assist the proletariat's revolutionary struggle. Nor has any Marxist denied that bourgeois democracy was the preferred form of bourgeois rule precisely because it permits the containing of the workers' struggles along reformist channels. On the other hand, the claim that the proletariat should not care whether or not it has a relative freedom to form trade unions or political parties, assemble, print newspapers, bear arms, participate in elections, speak in public, etc., is absurd.³

Behind the "Dry Well" Theory--Fear of the Reform Struggle

Though the "Lefts" attempt to convince the masses that the bourgeoisie has run out of reforms and no longer has any taste for concessions, they cannot quite convince themselves. In fact, behind their theories on the bourgeoisie, usually stands a fear of the effect of reforms and the reform struggle upon the masses. Implicitly or explicitly, "Left-Wing" communists assume that the reform struggle only breeds illusions among the masses, and that winning actual reforms pacifies them. The old phrase "the worse the better" represents the logical conclusion of this line of argument. In practice, the "Lefts" betray an indifference to or hostility towards the course of the reform

struggle, a desire to "get it over with" so the masses can learn that it does not bring them anything. Of course, where Marxist-Leninists display a lack of concern for leading the reform struggle, the masses generally draw very different conclusions: namely that they have nothing to expect from the Marxist-Leninists who cannot or will not lead the fight for reforms. In such a situation the masses turn all the more resolutely to reformist leadership. In other words, if the communists are so "left" as to counterpose themselves to the struggle for reforms, the masses will choose the reform struggle over the Marxist-Leninists. And no one should delude himself or herself into thinking that a working class with no confidence in communist leadership for the reform struggle will suddenly look to that leadership in the struggle for state power.

What conclusions the masses draw from the reform struggle depend on the strength and orientation of the revolutionary Left. If Marxist-Leninists abdicate all responsibility for the masses' immediate interests, the masses will make their own judgments about their daily needs, and those judgments will not spontaneously include any revolutionary perspective. If, on the other hand, the Marxist-Leninists fight for leadership of the reform struggle, if they emerge as the only genuine champions of the masses' immediate interests, and through that authority, teach the masses that only proletarian revolution can eliminate the injustices, oppression, and exploitation of the capitalist system, then the masses will arrive at a revolutionary position on the reform struggle.

The bourgeoisie cannot reform away capitalism. Since reforms do not touch the capitalist nature of production, reforms will never satisfy the masses. While reformists preach that the proletariat should content itself with reforms, revolutionaries educate the proletariat to the limitations of the reform struggle. Where communists have gained the confidence of the working class, their message will carry the day. In fact, the struggle to wrench reforms and democratic concessions from the bourgeoisie enables the masses to see that reforms do not alter the fundamental conditions of their existence. Pamphlets and speeches alone cannot bring this lesson home. Besides Marxist-Leninist leadership, it takes the masses' experience in the fight for their immediate interests to convince them of the necessity for the all-out struggle for proletarian dictatorship.

"Under capitalism it is usually the case, and not the exception, that the oppressed classes cannot "exercise" their democratic rights...Only those who are totally incapable of thinking, or those who are entirely unfamiliar with Marxism, will conclude that, therefore, a republic is of no use, that freedom of divorce is of no use, that democracy is of no use, that self-determination of nations is of no use! Marxists know that democracy does not abolish class

oppression, but only makes the class struggle clearer, broader, more open and sharper; and this is what we want. The more complete freedom of divorce is, the clearer will it be to the woman that the source of her "domestic slavery" is not the lack of rights, but capitalism. The more democratic the system of government is, the clearer it will be to the workers that the root of the evil is not the lack of rights, but capitalism. The more complete national equality is (and it is not complete without freedom of secession), the clearer will it be to the workers of the oppressed nation that it is not a question of lack of rights, but of capitalism. And so on...

"The right to divorce, like all democratic rights under capitalism without exception, is difficult to exercise, is conventional, restricted, formal, and narrow. Nevertheless, no respectable Social-Democrat would consider any one who repudiated this right a democrat, let alone a socialist. This is the whole point. "Democracy" is nothing but the proclaiming and exercising of "rights" that are very little and very conventionally exercised under capitalism. But unless these rights are proclaimed, unless a struggle for immediate rights is waged, unless the masses are educated in the spirit of such a struggle, socialism is impossible. (Lenin, cited in **The Woman Question**, pp. 81-82; also in **CW 23**, pp. 72-74)

In Search of the "True Concession"

Since our "Lefts" cannot prevent the reform struggle--no more than they can return to 1902--they must put forward some tactical orientation on it, which expresses their conception of its inherent dangers. Groups like the WVO do this through a peculiar theory of the "true concession" and the "sham reform."⁴

"As the revolutionary vanguard, communists must be able to distinguish true concessions that reflect the genuine needs and demands of the people from concessions that have been distorted by the bourgeoisie to weaken the revolutionary movement." (WV, **op. cit.**, p. 53)

According to this position, "true concessions" reflect the genuine needs and demands of the people, therefore do not reflect the interests of the bourgeoisie, therefore strengthen the revolutionary movement. "Sham reforms" reflect the interests of the bourgeoisie, therefore do not reflect the needs and demands of the people, therefore weaken the revolutionary movement. "Lefts" pledge their support to the first type, and their resistance to the second. But these definitions really provide very little guidance, since in each case they turn on the very ambiguous word, "reflect." Reflect means to cast back, but not all reflections are the same: some surfaces reflect likenesses, some distorted likenesses, and some simply light. Reforms in fact

frequently offer both a distorted likeness and a relatively true picture: an extremely distorted likeness of the interests of the proletariat and a relatively true picture of the strength of different classes and class fractions in a given arena of battle.

A given political reform will generally constitute a compromise between different fractions of the bourgeoisie, who have different priorities in keeping inflation down or production up, unemployment or wages down, subsidizing wage levels through social welfare programs or increasing the pool of poverty-stricken workers, stabilizing the home front or crushing "Big Labor," etc., etc. A single reform may respond to certain needs of the people, though in a form acceptable to that fraction of the bourgeoisie which retains control of the compromise solution within the bourgeoisie. Most importantly, the reform will reflect the relative strengths and weaknesses of the people's camp and the various bourgeois forces. Revolutionary mass struggle will give reforms one shape; reactionary mass mobilizations, another. Many reforms have this contradictory character. Finally, part of the interest of the bourgeoisie and its various fractions in any particular reform depends upon what effects they think it might have on the class struggle--how it might weaken the mass appeal of the revolutionary forces. But since no reform changes the basic contradictions of capitalism, and since the bourgeoisie cannot control the conduct of the proletarian vanguard, they cannot determine in advance whether a particular reform will assist or retard the growth of the revolutionary movement.

In advancing a theory of "true concessions" and "sham reforms," and advocating support of the first, and boycott, abstention, or opposition to the second, our "Lefts" merely fulfill their own prophecy on the impossibility of almost any reform.⁵ For the bourgeoisie does not institute any reform in order to **promote** the revolutionary movement. So long as capitalist slavery exists, the proletariat can win no reform which does not bear the marks of bourgeois interests. After all, we live in a bourgeois society, and all reforms are thus reforms of bourgeois rule, i.e., bourgeois reforms. Yet

"Understanding that where capitalism continues to exist reforms cannot be either enduring or far-reaching, the workers ["who have assimilated Marx's theory"] fight for better conditions and use them to intensify the fight against wage-slavery." (Lenin, "Marxism and Reformism," **CW 19**, p. 372)

While paying lipservice to this perspective in theory, in practice the "Lefts" define almost all reforms (particularly political reforms) as "sham" "distorted" concessions which must be opposed (see the RU/RCP, WVO, etc., positions on the ERA bill; also the Boston busing plan). When Lenin fought the reformists, he argued:

"the party of the working-class, while not rejecting this 'payment on account' (Engels' expression) must under no circumstances forget the other particularly important aspect of the matter, which is often lost sight of by the liberals and opportunists--the role of 'concessions' **as an instrument of deception and corruption.**" (CW 12, p. 217)

But our "Lefts" take the matter "to a higher level": because "the other particularly important aspect of the matter" is the role of concessions as an instrument of deception and corruption, we should forget about the first aspect, and reject this "payment on account." Lenin ridiculed just this kind of metaphysics:

"Conclusions. Point (a) The Duma being..a deal...and a weapon of the counter-revolution...Quite right!...'only serves to bolster up the autocracy'...This 'only' is wrong." (Lenin, CW 15, p. 389)

Part of the attraction of our "Left-Wing" for many comrades newly entered into the movement lies in its charming simplicity. Instead of soberly analyzing the concrete effects of this or that reform--determining its dangers and utility for the revolutionary movement--the "Lefts" advance an easy test: if the bourgeoisie does it, it's bad. How reforms will come about without some intervention by the ruling class, they do not say. From this perspective they derive their tactics in the reform struggle. Rather, their tactic, since the "Lefts" really know only one: unswerving, uncompromising, "revolutionary oppositionism." To a complex problem--how to do revolutionary work in the reform struggle without succumbing to reformist influence--the "Lefts" bring a neat solution: get out of the reform struggle, through boycotting it, fencing themselves off from it, racing ahead of it, or denouncing it in "militant," mimeographed exposures. For example, the WVO justifies their boycott of the Boston busing plan as follows:

"In 1905, under the weight of a massive Russian peoples' movement, the Czar 'gave in' by calling a Constituent Assembly (Duma). Mensheviks wanted to participate in it since they thought it was a real concession. The Bolsheviks...boycotted it, because they knew it was a false concession aimed at disintegrating the mass movement." (op. cit., p. 53)

Yes, "a Duma, or Cadet, Cabinet [was] just such a false, ambiguous and Zubatov reform." (Lenin, CW 11, p. 72) But the boycott tactic did not follow simply from the character of the reform proposed; it also followed from the actual state of mass struggle, as Lenin always insisted:

"...Russian experience has provided us with one successful and correct instance (1905), and another that was incorrect (1906), of the use of the

boycott by the Bolsheviks. Analyzing the first case, we see that we succeeded in preventing a reactionary government from convening a reactionary parliament in a situation in which extra-parliamentary revolutionary mass action (strikes in particular) was developing at great speed, when not a single section of the proletariat and peasantry could support the reactionary government in any way, and when the revolutionary proletariat was gaining influence over the backward masses through the strike struggle and through the agrarian movement. It is quite obvious that this experience is not applicable to present-day European conditions..." (**Left-Wing Communism**, Ch. 7)

It is just as obvious that this experience is not applicable to present-day U.S. conditions or to the Boston busing struggle. But "Lefts" have little time for sizing up our actual situation; instead they quote Lenin:

"...put forward all these demands, not in a reformist, but in a revolutionary way; not by keeping within the framework of bourgeois legality, but by breaking through it...by drawing the masses into real action, by widening and fomenting the struggle for every kind of fundamental democratic demand, right up to and including the direct onslaught against the bourgeoisie, to the socialist revolution which will expropriate the bourgeoisie.' This is the only correct approach." (**Workers Viewpoint**, Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 47)

Did Lenin endorse this as the "only correct approach," as a gadget good for all occasions, writ in stone for every generation of revolutionaries? Certainly not; when Lenin wrote this important sections of the proletariat belonged to and pledged their devotion to a revolutionary party. We U.S. communists have not made the same advances. We have not won important sections of the class vanguard to Marxism-Leninism. Therefore, our tactics within the reform struggle will necessarily be different. Note that Lenin includes a very important condition in the quote for "breaking through" "the framework of bourgeois legality": namely, that the masses be drawn into "real action." If the masses are not prepared to break through the framework of bourgeois legality, if they have only **begun** to stir in an historical sense, what do phrases about "only" fighting in a revolutionary way amount to? They amount to "waving little red flags," to a general recipe for small propaganda sects living on the fringes of the workers' movement, and no more.

"What If?" or The "Lefts" Lie Down To Sleep

At the root of these errors lie the subjective desires and agitated impatience of the petit-bourgeoisie. Where the Marxist-Leninist asks, what is, the "Leftist" muses, what if? **What if** we didn't have to dirty our hands with the reform struggle? Wouldn't that be great? **What if** the workers could pick up revolutionary consciousness from our leaflets alone, and didn't have to learn through their own experience? Wouldn't that be great? **What if** the proletariat didn't have to be schooled in the struggle for democracy? Then revolution could happen so much more quickly! Yes, it would be wonderful, but if wishes were fishes, our nets would be full: we would have Soviets, a Red Army and proletarian dictatorship. But they are not, and we have none of these.

Wishing has its uses, but mistaking wishes for reality has none. Yet the "Lefts" cannot quite bring themselves to denounce their favorite wish as a mere fantasy, namely that the proletariat spontaneously surges towards revolution. Many ultra-lefts would quickly deny any such implication, but whether in a covert or explicit form, this assumption guides "Left" tactics, inspires "Left" strategy and constitutes the very reason for the "Lefts'" existence. Groups like the WVO give it doctrinal and historical support:

"Unlike [!!] other struggles, such as the black people's civil rights, women workers, eight hour work day struggles, etc., [which] have all been successful in one degree or another [!!] on the Chinese labor question, however, opportunism and social-chauvinism completely prevailed. Its fateful effect was seen later in having the same chauvinist approaches and divisive tactics being successfully applied to the whole working class. Thereby the whole labor movement was **derailed and bogged down** in the stagnant pool of **reformism**. The anti-Chinese labor movement in the last quarter of the 19th century must be remembered as the **original fall** of the American labor movement." ("Preliminary Draft on the Asian National Question in America: Part 1. The Chinese National Question"; approvingly referred to in **WV**, Vol. 2, No. 1; emphases added)

Ignoring the historical inaccuracies of this passage, which are monumental, we are left with a fundamentally spontaneist thesis: the notion that the labor movement "falls" into reformism from some lofty revolutionary height.⁶ Yet the phrase "original fall" is no isolated slip of the pen. On the contrary, WVO has elaborated it into an entire theory of the "diversion" of the spontaneous movement, a theory which contrasts with that of Lenin,

"Faithful lackeys of the bourgeoisie, they **diverted** the American labor movement away from its historic mission of the emancipation of the working-class." (**WV**, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 64)

"In evading the historical lessons of the wretched role of reformism within the labor movement...which **diverts** [emphasis added] the working class away from **emancipation as a class**, the OL exhibits a profound ignorance." (*Ibid.*, p. 12)

Compare with Lenin's discussion:

"the **spontaneous** development of the working-class movement leads to its subordination to bourgeois ideology, **to its development along the lines of the Credo programme**; for the spontaneous working-class movement is trade-unionism...and trade-unionism means the ideological enslavement of the workers by the bourgeoisie. Hence, our task, the task of Social-Democracy, is **to combat spontaneity, to divert** the working-class movement from this spontaneous, trade-unionist striving to come under the wing of the bourgeoisie, and to bring it under the wing of revolutionary Social-Democracy." (*CW 5*, pp. 384-85)

Of two things, one: either the trade-unionist "misleaders" divert the working class from their spontaneous emancipation as a class, or communists divert the spontaneous movement **towards** that goal.

If the proletariat were spontaneously revolutionary, we would not need the intervention of a strong Communist Party to divert its "natural" motion and prepare it to seize power. And here lies the very crux of the ultra-leftist's sectarian impatience with history. Some "Left" dogmatists may recite chapter and verse on the importance of the reform struggle, but since their "left" tactics provide no real guidance for how to act within it, they end by denying it any real significance. They may chant sacred chants on the necessity of a Marxist-Leninist party, but if they do not work for principled unity and unmask every argument which perpetuates our unprincipled polarization, then they do not serve that future Party. The one feeds the other: practical abstention from the reform struggle, no proletarian vanguard; splintered communist movement, no ability to divert the spontaneous movement from, at best, trade-unionist politics. But the "Lefts" have no taste for preparing the U.S. working class for revolution. They figure to draft the strategy for the working class, and leave the rest to the "essentially revolutionary" proletariat. For if not, if we must do long-term work in the reform struggle, what will happen to the revolution? It will become "strait-jacketed" in the clutches of bourgeois democracy.

For the critical conception the minority substituted a dogmatic one; for the materialist conception, an idealist one. Instead of actual conditions, you make sheer will the driving force of the revolution. We say to the workers: "You have fifteen or twenty or fifty years of civil and international wars to go

through, not just to alter conditions but to alter yourselves and qualify for political power." You, on the contrary say: "We must obtain power at once or we might as well lay ourselves down to sleep." (Marx, "Address of Central Committee to the Communist League")

This "Left" subjectivism has at least one "useful" function, however: it protects the separate existence of "Left" groups over and above a united communist movement. Since "left" sectarians do not have the organization which could have much practical effect on the reform struggle anyway, they can rationalize and sanctify their own isolation by remaining outside of the proletariat's daily battles. Hiding their sectarianism is the only way they can excuse it.

The Most Pernicious Menace

The implementation of a "left" opportunist line on the struggle for reforms and democracy will undermine the masses' confidence in revolutionary struggle and in the revolutionaries. That earlier generations of U.S. Marxists have repeatedly fallen into "leftist" reactions to reformism means that today's communists must guard against that reaction all the more vigorously. Nothing less than the future of our movement is at stake.

With this danger in mind, Lenin wrote to the Socialist Propaganda League in the U.S.:

"But we never say in our press that too great emphasis has been heretofore placed upon so-called 'Immediate Demands,' and that thereby socialism can be diluted: we say and we prove that all bourgeois parties, all parties except the working-class revolutionary Party, are liars and hypocrites when they speak of reforms. We try to help the working class to get the smallest possible but real improvement (economic and political) in their situation and we add always that no reform can be durable, sincere, serious if not seconded by revolutionary methods of struggle of the masses. We preach always that a socialist party not uniting this struggle for reforms with the revolutionary methods of working-class movement can become a sect, can be severed from the masses, and that that is the most pernicious menace to the success of the clear-cut revolutionary socialism." (LCW 21, pp. 423-24)

While scoring the social-chauvinist gradualism and reformism of the Second International, Lenin warns the U.S. left-wing against the opposite error. **That error--"Left" opportunism--"is the most pernicious menace to the success of clear-cut revolutionary socialism," in other words, to the success of anti-revisionism.**

"The greatest, perhaps the only danger to the genuine revolutionary is that of exaggerated revolutionism, ignoring the limits and conditions in which revolutionary methods are appropriate and can be successfully employed. True revolutionaries have mostly come a cropper when they began to write 'revolution' with a capital R, to elevate 'revolution' to something almost divine, to lose their heads, to lose the ability to reflect, weigh and ascertain in the coolest and most dispassionate manner at what moment, under what circumstances and in which sphere of action you must act in a revolutionary manner, and at what moment, under what circumstances and in which sphere you must turn to reformist actions." (**CW 33**, pp. 110-11)

Footnotes

¹ On the subject of Plekhanov's book, Lenin cautions, "His pamphlet falls into two distinct parts; one of them is historical and literary, and contains valuable material on the history of the ideas of Stirner, Proudhon, and others; the other is Philistine, and contains a clumsy dissertation on the theme that an anarchist cannot be distinguished from a bandit." (**State and Revolution, CW 25**, p. 475)

² "A democratic republic is the best possible political shell for capitalism." (Lenin, **State and Revolution**, chapter 1, part 3). Not the best possible shell for capitalism in its final stage, or what WVO calls the "third phase," but for capitalism, period.

³ The MLOC quote which advances this view also confuses the bourgeoisie itself, whether reactionary monarchist or democratic republican, with bourgeois democratic rule, a confusion Lenin never made. It disguises itself by first saying there is a quantitative difference between bourgeois democracy and fascism, then repeating Lenin's remarks as a proof, and concluding with a paraphrase of Lenin's quote which changes its meaning entirely.

⁴ Though not all put the distinction this baldly, most "Lefts" share the same general framework.

⁵ The "Lefts" static conception of "true concessions" amounts to a theory of "proletarian reforms," a kind of "Left" economist variant of Palmiro Togliatti's famous views on so-called "structural reforms" which will "fundamentally change" the conditions of capitalist society. The difference lies in that the Italian revisionist leader believed such reforms were perfectly possible under capitalism, while the ultra-lefts do not believe they will see their "true

concessions" this side of proletarian dictatorship. But the idealistic notion of a reform which by itself expresses completely the interests of proletarian revolution remains the same. For more on "structural reforms," see the CPC pamphlet, "More on the Differences Between Comrade Togliatti and Us," and various Albanian publications of the early 1960's.

⁶ Sometime around 1875, no less! Hermann Kriege, William Sylvis of the National Labor Union--these were revolutionaries?