

Chicago Workers' Voice

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This issue of the *CWV Theoretical Journal* features

- * The debate continues on Palestine: "Zionism is not going to be overthrown any time soon" vs. the perspective of revolutionary struggle of the working masses
- * Articles on Mexico and India in relation to the world imperialist order
- * Debate on the what is socialism

Contents

The Capitalist System is Devastating the Mexican Working People by Frank, Seattle	p. 1
A year Since the Collapse of the Marxist-Leninist Party, by Joseph, Detroit	p. 6
On Ideology: On Looking Over the Revised Notes of the November Meeting by Neil, Los Angeles.....	p. 10
Some Thought on the Indian Economy, from <u>Proletarian Emancipation</u> , India, (Revolutionary Proletarian Platform).....	p. 12
Palestine Revisited:	
Mark (Detroit) replies to Jason (Seattle).....	p. 17
Neil (LA) Replies to Jason	p. 25
Tim (Detroit) Replies to Jason.....	p. 27
Jason Defends His Position on Palestine, by Jason (Seattle).....	p. 30
How Mark Equates "Cooperative Anarchy" with "Anarchy of Production", by Ben (Seattle).....	p. 39
Left-Wing Neo-Conservatives: the Reflection of neo-conservatism in socialist thinking — Part One, by Joseph (Detroit).....	p. 45
Book Review of <u>The Proletariat: A Challenge to Western Civilization</u> by Gustav A. Briefs (1937). Reviewed by Pete (Detroit).....	p. 57
Correspondence:	
Two letters from the Philippines	p. 64
Announcing <u>Red Orange</u>	p. 69
Workplace and Community Struggles:	
Fighting against Proposition 187: Which Way Forward?, Los Angeles.....	p. 70
Two articles on Postal worker issues, Detroit.....	p. 70

The Capitalist System is Devastating the Mexican Working People

Frank, Seattle

"The overwork of the employed part of the working class swells the ranks of the reserve, whilst conversely the greater pressure, that the latter by its competition exerts on the former, forces these to submit to overwork and to subjugation under the dictates of capital. The condemnation of one part of the working class to enforced idleness by the over-work of the other part, and the converse, becomes a means of enriching the individual capitalists, and accelerates at the same time the production of the industrial reserve army on a scale corresponding with the advance of social accumulation."

"...the mechanism of capitalistic production so manages matters that the absolute increase of capital is accompanied by no corresponding rise in the general demand for labor."

"The greater the social wealth, the functioning capital, the extent and energy of its growth, and, therefore, also the absolute mass of the proletariat and the productiveness of its labor, the greater is the industrial reserve army. The

same causes which develop the expansive power of capital, develop also the labor power at its disposal. The relative mass of the industrial reserve army increases therefore with the potential energy of wealth. But the greater this reserve army in proportion to the active labor army, the greater is the mass of a consolidated surplus population (I), whose misery is in inverse ratio to its torment of labor. The more extensive, finally, the Lazarus layers of the working-class, and the industrial reserve army, the greater is official pauperism. This is the absolute general law of capitalist accumulation."

"... Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, agony of toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality, mental degradation, at the opposite pole, i.e., on the side of the class that produces its own product in the form of capital."

These are a few of the many conclusions made by Karl Marx in his study of the capitalist system of production. Are they applicable to

the modern-day world? Some Seattle members from the majority of the now disintegrated Marxist-Leninist Party of the United States tried to deny they were by pointing to the fact that sometimes rich and poor grew richer together for example. But Marx never denied that this took place. In fact in the same chapter (Chapter 25) of *Capital* just quoted from, he showed both how and why this indeed took place.

But Marx studied the capitalist system historically and as a whole, whereas the heroes of the "majority" (including Fred) seized upon particular features of this system and used them to argue against the direction the whole system is moving. To justify giving up the proletarian revolutionary cause, they wanted to update" the fundamental method, analyses and conclusions of Marx and Lenin in such a way as to deny them. Their error wasn't that they called for updating, studying contemporary world developments, etc. (and Fred in particular made hundreds of such calls) but that they abandoned a proletarian standpoint and

materialist dialectics. Thus, when they did make a few stabs at agitating on contemporary political issues the results reflected a subjective bowing before the exploitative *status quo*.

On the other hand, the comrades who formed the minority at the dissolution congress of the MLP hadn't bemoaned the "theoretical poverty" of the party for years, weren't known for the constant refrain that we needed to study contemporary world developments, etc.

Nevertheless, most of us saw pushing ahead the theoretical work as being the present decisive task. And we all agree that one part of the latter involves getting a better grasp on the present world situation as well as the role various international institutions are playing in it. One such institution is APEC (the Asia-Pacific Economic Forum) and a couple of us have begun a study of it which is far from being completed.

Since Mexico has been much in the news since the December devaluation of the peso, and I've been collecting some information on it as part of the APEC research, I thought it timely to share some of that information now rather than later. (And by including it in a somewhat polemical article, I hope to inspire others to look more

deeply into the basic theories of Marx as well as perhaps join with the minority in its theoretical endeavors.)

Because my sources of information are strictly the capitalist press and our work is still in progress, we may eventually find that this or that statistic is incorrect. Nevertheless, I have yet to see anything which contradicts Marx's theory on the general law of capitalist accumulation in the Mexican developments. The opposite is the case. Marxism is being confirmed. More fuel is being laid for a revolutionary upsurge. When and how that upsurge develops, and where it leads, depends very much on the ideological formation and organization of the Mexican working class, very much on its grasp of the laws of capitalism and Marxist theory.

For the 40 million Mexicans living in what the government itself defines as poverty, the devaluation of the peso means a much worse poverty than what existed before. And devaluation, hand-in-hand with the increasing interest rates which have accompanied it, is also impoverishing most of what the government calls the middle class. I will leave a fuller analysis of the devaluation of the peso to other articles in the *CWV* and here touch on the question of what existed before December 1994.

A September 1994 article by Enrique Rangel in the *Dallas Morning News* provides many answers for us. And since he uses both studies by the Mexican government, as well as private studies in compiling his report, his answers have to be reckoned with. According to Rangel: "In a single decade, the purchasing power of the working class -- a third of Mexico's 90 million people -- has plunged 60 percent, government and private studies show. Meanwhile, the rich have gotten richer."

The rich have gotten richer:

"According to the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Information, 20 percent of Mexico's population now controls 54 percent of the country's wealth, compared with 49.5 percent 10 years ago." And, "An independent ranking by *Forbes Magazine* shows that in 1990, only two Mexicans qualified among the 400 wealthiest people in the world. By last year there were 13. This year the number is 24."

Meanwhile, with new factories, new investments, new billionaires, a recovery, etc., the poor have only been getting poorer--both poorer relative to the rich and poorer absolutely. Again quoting Rangel: "the average worker...would have to work 129.6 hours a week to maintain the

same standard of living of 12 years ago."

More, "A study shows that in 1982, before Mexico renegotiated its foreign debt, the average blue-collar employee worked 8.1 hours to buy *la canasta basica*, or the basic basket of food. . . .

"By 1983, a year after the peso was devalued, because Mexico defaulted on its \$85 billion foreign debt, the average person worked 10.5 hours to buy the same seven staples.

"By 1986 it was 12.7 hours, and last year 21.9," according to the study by researcher Jesus Ramones Saldana of the Autonomous University of Nuevo Leon in Monterrey. And, "Today, (that is, before the latest devaluation of the peso), about 2 pounds of beef costs \$5.20, more than what 6 million workers earn daily."

The employed section of the working class is also slaving terribly long hours to make ends meet. Blue-collar workers typically work 48 hours a week.

And to again quote Rangel: "...real wages have fallen steadily for most of Mexico's workers, particularly for the blue-collar jobs. Blue-collar workers make the equivalent of \$8.40 a day, only \$3.13 in 1981 dollars, com-

pared with \$9.13 a day in 1981. The result: At least 25 percent of the labor force now moonlights."

"Hundreds of thousands of people who can't find a second job peddle cheap goods on the streets or solicit odd jobs." Finally the army of unemployed is also growing:"

"The number of people on the streets is swelling; it's estimated at 3 million to 5 million, reflecting the growing ranks of the poor"

"The government puts the jobless rate at 3.4 percent, but private economists believe it's much higher--they say anywhere from 10 to 15 percent."

Now Enrique Rangel's article didn't directly speak to the plight of Mexico's peasantry. But perhaps it didn't have to. Perhaps the Chiapas rebellion is the best commentary on their situation: they're starving out, and many are willing to resort to desperate measures to alleviate their poverty.

When *"capitalist production takes possession of agriculture, and in proportion to the extent to which it does so, the demand for an agricultural laboring population falls absolutely,"* according to Marx. Thus the conditions of the masses of people on the land worsen, they face starvation and emigrate to the cities. This has been going on for

many many years in Mexico.

And despite all the "land to the people" rhetoric (and even laws) of the Mexican government it's been large-scale mechanized agribusiness which has taken control of the countryside. Of course, dawn to dusk labor on small family plots can't compete with big capitalist operations and mechanized giant farms have no need for the millions of hands which formerly tilled the soil on small plots. On top of this, the NAFTA agreement blocks protection of Mexican agriculture, and many Mexican peasants saw it as being the final nail in their coffin. Corn prices would go even lower, and they wouldn't be able to exist.

This brief review of the class polarization taking place in Mexico should make one stop and think when they hear of Mexico's wondrous recovery of recent years, its march from Third World to First World status and so on.

In the 1970s and early 80s, Mexico went into great debt. In August 1982 the government devalued the peso, and the country plunged into its worst economic crisis in more than 50 years. The recovery afterwards was on the backs of the working class. Now we have yet another devaluation of the peso, increasing interest

rates and much talk of double-digit inflation soon coming back with a vengeance. It seems that class struggle by the workers and poor is called for as never before.

But now let's turn to Mr. Carlos Fuentes. Carlos Fuentes is a very widely known Mexican author, former ambassador to France, a United Nations representative, etc., whose articles are often carried in the American press. One such article appeared in the *New York Times* in mid-January of this year. Naturally, being a respectable bourgeois writing in this newspaper, Mr. Fuentes opposed class struggle by the workers and poor. But in doing so he posed an interesting question.

Fuentes begins with an analysis of some immediate issues behind the December devaluation of the peso (see **footnote 2**) and vigorously decries that the several devaluations of the peso since 1982 have left "40 million human beings living in poverty." He insists "the problem is political more than economic," and his solution is a ten point program for democracy in Mexico.

Now Marxist revolutionaries are certainly for a broadening of democratic rights for the people of Mexico and all other lands. But Fuentes'

"fight" for democracy consists of empty lamentations on how the established powers should just change, television should stop parroting the presidential line, etc. He wants the Mexican political system to look more like that of the United States, Canada, Western Europe, Japan, etc. (and since his article was written the Mexican government has made a few reforms which undoubtedly please him). But democracy in the countries he admires so much has a class character. It screens a real class dictatorship of the monopoly capitalist class over the working class and poor.

Above we dwelt on the worsening conditions of the Mexican working class and poor under the Mexican political system. But how have the workers and poor been faring in the industrialized democracies during the same period?

Look at the United States, the dominant imperialist power and world exploiter of today. It seems here that the same general phenomena have been occurring as in Mexico. The rich have been getting richer and the poor poorer. Real wages have been falling since the early 70's(3), the average work week keeps growing, the level of "acceptable" unemployment keeps rising, homelessness has skyrocketed, etc. So we see that capitalist democracy isn't overcoming "millions of peo-

ple living in poverty" at all. Their number is growing.

Yes, in Mexico the poverty may be more shocking, some of the changes more dramatic, etc. But then some of the changes in the United States and other rich countries may be more dramatic than in Mexico as well. Take homelessness. Virtually every wealthy industrialized country has had an unprecedented surge in the homeless population since the late 1980s. And according to a survey by the World Bank Housing Industries Program (1990), it was the richest countries which had the highest homeless rates. For example, in those countries with a per capita GNP of \$21,130 or more, the median homeless rate was 2.31 per 1000 people. For middle and high middle countries (i.e., Mexico), median homelessness was from 0.93 down to 0.24 per 1000 people. Only the very poorest countries had a homeless rate which even approached that of the rich countries.

Homelessness indicates pauperism--which brings us back to the beginning. It seems Marx's "general law of capitalist accumulation" remains very much in effect---in Mexico and in countries like the United States. The particularities of its operation vary in each country: each country has its own history and is integrated into a world economy which

features relations of domination and subordination, etc., but the law is operating nonetheless. Broader freedoms for the masses can open avenues whereby they can better fight to temporarily alleviate some of the worst effects of this law and they should be struggled for. But to end the situation of millions (really billions) of human beings living in poverty(4) communist revolution (not Fuentes' liberal reforms) is the historical necessity.

Notes:

(1) When Marx writes of surplus population he means a *"population of greater extent than suffices for the average needs of the self-expansion of capital."* According to his theory the laboring population produces, along with the accumulation of capital, *"the means by which itself is made relatively superfluous, is turned into a relative surplus population; and it does this to an always increasing extent."* Let those associated with the "majority" prove Marx in error on this!

(2) Fuentes gives the following analysis:

"Mexico's financial crisis is really a political crisis. The economic reasons for the debacle are clear."

"In the wake of the North American Free Trade Agreement, the Salinas administration opened its exports, until currency reserves dwindled from a high of \$30 billion to a mere \$6 billion ... and going fast."

"The economy became beholden to foreign investment to sustain the peso's value and pay for expanding imports."

"But foreign investment was mostly in the stock market and speculation. Only 15 percent was destined for the real economy: building plants, higher employment, higher productivity."

"As soon as investors realized the peso's value was supported by nothing real, a crisis of confidence developed."

"Capital fled, Mexico could no longer pay for its imports and the peso was devalued."

(3) During the past 13 years the number of full-time workers making less than \$13,091 a year (8 percent below the federal poverty level for a family of four) has increased by 50% in the United States.

(4) On January 18, 1995 no less a personage than Russell Baker, the often humorous syndicated columnist for the *New York Times*, blurted out the truth: "capitalism demands that the poor always be with us". And he rightly

held that the welfare reforms being worked out in Washington won't raise the poor out of poverty and the politicians there know it. But Baker glides over the fact that the proposed legislation will drive many more people into desperate poverty. Moreover, to him, the welfare "problem" (really the question of surplus population, which includes the industrial reserve army -- part of which is on welfare in the U.S.), is "rooted in the structure of American capitalism." And it's through this little word "structure" that Baker creates the impression that if America just had a better education system, the problem of unemployable people (unemployable under capitalism) and, hence, unemployment would be solved.<>

[Jason, continued from p. 39]

clearly in the tactics discussed above, while steering clear of the shoals of other harmful currents.<>

A Year Since the Collapse of the Marxist-Leninist Party

Joseph, Detroit

It's been a year since the Fifth Congress, a year without the Marxist-Leninist Party. What has this year shown about the controversies that destroyed the party and set comrade against comrade?

Broken promises

The former Central Committee majority and Fred and Ben promised us theoretical advances if only we abandoned the *Workers' Advocate* and the "united front syndrome" and party activism. Theory would flourish when freed from the party.

Very well. It's been a year. Enough time to see some indication of the new thought. Where is that theoretical work from the majority, even if just in outlines and suppositions? So far, all we've seen from the majority is red-baiting and neo-conservative chatter about the changed nature of imperialism.

And where's the journal for the majority that the Boston Communist Study Group promised? It hasn't seen the light of day. It's dead. Even if an issue is finally put out for appearances sake, it will be nothing but a swan song. Yet this journal was the program

set forward by Joe (Boston), patterned after the proposal of Michael (ex-Detroit) to the Fourth Plenum of the CC. This was the supposedly realistic alternative that, it was hinted, might have saved the party. This was the journal whose supply of fresh and original material had to be protected by vetoing the "temporary journal", which would have provided a platform for all comrades from MLP circles.

Well, why hasn't there been a majority journal? It's because the majority leaders were never serious about the journal. Their hearts aren't in it. They have nothing to say to the activists.

Party methods vs. factions

The former CC majority, Fred, and Ben promised an era of exciting debates and freedom for all if only we threw out the old party methods and embraced freedom for factions. Well, there's no party; there's perfect freedom for factions; and there certainly are enough of them. Yet in the last year the born-again majority factionalists fought tooth and nail against open discussion, and whined that they wouldn't even put forward

their views unless guaranteed an applauding audience. They sought to deny opponents a forum, in utter violation of former MLP norms. They put their fingers in their ears and shouted "Stalinist! Fundamentalist! Monolithist! I'm not going to read your articles!" Factionalism has again proved an obstacle to discussion and investigation.

And in the pre-5th Congress discussion, a lot was said about whether research in one area was known by other areas. Very well, what has been the experience of the last year? Theoretical work, reports on views, and discussion do not flow from faction to faction. In a centralized party such as the old MLP, if it is really built on conscious participation of its members, there is an obligation to let comrades know the general picture. But today no grouping has any obligation to let anyone else know anything.

New life

The majority assured us that controversies and Marxist fervor were foreign to the spirit of investigation. Oh, it was too hostile; it was a witch-hunt; it was an "ideo-

logical blowout" (horrors! shiver, shiver).

As it turned out, it was precisely those who saw value in the controversies and took Marxism seriously who maintained work. True, it has been a difficult period to maintain work, without the support and encouragement provided by party organization. For a number of sympathizers interested in the continuation of revolutionary communism, there is little way for them to participate. Nevertheless the last year has seen a number of comrades step forward to take on new responsibilities. The central question behind the continuation of this work is that of the significance of anti-revisionism. Should the anti-revisionist critique be completed, or should it be abandoned as flawed and "Stalinist"? The answer one gives to this says much about whether one continues work or goes non-political.

Who benefited from the collapse of the MLP?

Indeed, the collapse of the MLP removed the best attempt in the recent American revolutionary movement to develop a consistent and viable anti-revisionism. And anti-revisionism is today the form in which Marxism-Leninism can exist as a living doctrine. Thus the MLP's death all but closed a door for American activists, and also harmed sev-

eral groups throughout the world. Only continuing the anti-revisionist work dropped by the MLP can change this situation.

Naturally all the trends we fought benefit from the MLP's collapse. But the movement we were central to was that of revolutionary Marxism. And among those claiming that banner, it looks like the main beneficiary of our collapse will be Trotskyism in general, and apparently the Trotskyism of Tony Cliff and the ISO in particular. Trotskyism poses as the opponent of Stalinism although it is in many ways a carbon copy of Stalinism. No matter how absurd the dogmas of trotskyism are, the fact that it survives gives it a certain credibility. And the collapse of the anti-revisionist trend removes the main revolutionary criticism of Trotskyism.

For those who take it up, Trotskyism represents the end of real thought on theoretical issues. Cliff and the ISO gives them a ready-made analysis. The disquieting work of building up a firm foundation of anti-revisionism is replaced by a comforting set of dogmas: so what if these dogmas are wrong, they make a complete system.

The minority comes together

Now let's look closer at what happened to the minority in the past year.

The fragmentation of the MLP trend affected the whole party, and the minority is not a united and single-minded trend. However, it in the main consists of those who want to build an anti-revisionist communist trend. Meanwhile, anti-revisionists who stayed among the majority have rapidly been shedding their communist and activist beliefs: for example, Kate (Oakland)--who declared in SFBA #2 that "In this new difficult period of confusion and uncertainty we continue to be the revolutionary alternative to the extent we push forward the anti-revisionist struggle"--shed her anti-revisionism fairly soon after the Fifth Congress.

Prior to the pre-5th Congress discussion, the comrades who later formed the minority were divided by different approaches to the party crisis and different views on particular points of revolutionary theory. The minority crystallized at the 5th Congress after the defeat of the temporary journal. It was clear that the former CC majority was following a "scorched-earth" policy, as Tim later characterized it--if they didn't want to continue revolutionary work, no one should, if they didn't want to discuss differences, no one should, etc. Julie suggested that the *Chicago Workers' Voice* could carry out some of the work that had been proposed for the temporary jour-

nal. Other comrades supported this idea.

An active year

The formation of the minority had a profound effect. Those who have taken a lively interest in the theoretical debate have, I believe, found this year a most interesting--if difficult--one. It is a time when ideas and hypotheses and controversies have come into the open and are in flux, and when important issues are being probed.

In the past year, the minority succeeded in maintaining and initiating a range of activities. Michael (of the CC majority) in his Open Letter sneered at the size of the minority but this merely makes it more significant that the bulk of continuing activity since the dissolution has been carried out by the minority. For example, two magazines are being published (the *CWV Theoretical Journal* and *Struggle* magazine), and one book has appeared (*From Baba to Tovarishch*).

On the agitational front, the *Chicago Workers' Voice* and the *LA Workers' Voice* have continued, while the *Detroit Workers' Voice* has resumed publication. The minority has maintained a tiny, but actual link with the general masses. Chicago, LA and most recently Detroit have carried out agitation, and S.... in Oak-

land put out leaflets on the transit workers' struggle.

But theoretical work and discussion have occupied a central place in the attention of the minority. Besides the polemic with the majority, work took place on the current nature of imperialism, the composition of the workforce and its significance, the issue of "socialism in one country", the repudiation of Trotskyism, and on the relation of the women's movement and Bolshevism. There also been some study of basic Marxist-Leninist theory. The minority has also discussed some of its differences, especially varying perspectives about the future. Prior to the Fifth Congress, various comrades opposes to liquidationism put forward their different estimates and approaches in the general e-mail debate. Subsequently, discussion has continued among the minority concerning different perspectives, differing theoretical views, etc. Most of this has been private, but some of the discussion on the question of "socialism in one country" has been carried in the *CWV Theoretical Journal*.

Some of the differences among the minority are the inevitable differences of shading that occur in any trend. Others concern such fundamental issues as whether there even should be an anti-revisionist trend. R...

for example has an attitude to our theoretical work, the struggle with trotskyism and other trends, and the perspective of establishing a militant and critical anti-revisionist trend, similar to the cursing of members of the majority against religious fundamentalism. He too has compared our critical approach to all current movements and theories to Catholicism, and thinks we should be more "modest".

As well, there have been several general meetings of the minority, attended by a cross-section of minority activists. They have provided a bit of a centralized perspective to the ongoing work. They do not mean the minority is presently a formal organization, but they nevertheless helped the minority coordinate its work and allowed comrades to see what are the views and preoccupations of other comrades.

A future for anti-revisionist Marxism?

But however impressive the extent of minority work, it is no guarantee of the future. A large activity which no longer has spirit will collapse, as the MLP collapsed when its anti-revisionist fervor died. The minority faces having enough of a common perspective to inspire its work and to show its connection to the needs of the oppressed. The original impulse of tearing off

the majority-imposed gag isn't sufficient to continue work, and in fact never was the fundamental motive of most of the minority. The minority wanted to tear off the gag because it had something to say.

*The fading away of the majority into passivity underlines that the minority faces defining itself. The minority isn't just those opposed to the former CC majority. The real grouping of the minority that will be viable is that based on those who wish to continue building the anti-revisionist communist trend. The minority must find a way to present itself to the world, and consider what types of relations it wishes to have among itself. It's about time that the minority had its own banner--not as a fraction of the old, but as the builders of something new.

*There are still issues of importance concerning the controversies with the majority to be brought out. For example, there are issues such as state capitalism, the neo-conservative economics of various leading lights of the majority, further issues on imperialism etc.

*There is the question of connecting the theoretical concerns of the minority with the general struggle of trends in the left. The struggle in the MLP was not just an isolated peculiarity. The issues raised by the former CC majority are

those raised by the demoralized left in general.

*At the same time, however, dealing with differences among the minority raises some questions about party history and methods. This takes the minority back to dealing with MLP controversies and issues.

*The minority also faces the problem of how to provide a deeper study of basic Marxist principles. The reformist left is satisfied with an eclectic viewpoint, that is a little bit of this and a little bit of that and that ends up with nothing but putting revolutionary words on whatever is fashionable. It is a viewpoint that is susceptible to bourgeois pressure. But the minority requires a consistent revolutionary framework -- and only Marxism-Leninism provides it.

*The minority also faces the issues--not taken up this year--of developing agitation for communist society. As one seeks to build a trend for communist revolution, the issue of finding the way to free workers' and activists' minds from the constraints of "realistic" capitalist perspectives, and of developing a revolutionary consciousness will take on importance, both agitational and theoretically. Since the Fifth congress, other theoretical controversies have absorbed attention. But as the

minority develops, this issue will again rise to the surface.

*The minority is in a situation where a number of its supporters are geographically stranded pretty much by themselves. So it faces the problem of how to find a way for these supporters to take an active part in the work. It may find that this is connected with its ability to carry out a number of different fronts. Moreover, if the minority defines itself this year, this will give it a banner that will help it develop links with far-flung sympathizers. Overall, All these things are different aspects of a single task: contributing to the building of an anti-revisionist trend. The MLP accomplished a number of noteworthy things and left some theoretical views which I hope survive, but it nevertheless aborted its own trend. A quarter of a century of work prepared it to deal with the collapse of revisionism, and it flunked the test. So the trend we are building will not be a resuscitated MLP, but something new, although I believe the MLP left theories and experiences of value to this work.

The first year since the dissolution of the party was a reasonably good year for the minority. Despite pressure from the majority and from the overall neo-conservative atmosphere of these days, it has broken through the stagna-

tion in theoretical work that followed the Fourth Congress. It has encouraged dialogue and common activity between some of the comrades who had been separated by the fragmentation of the MLP politics.

The first year established a basis for the minority to continue its work. But whether this work deepens--even whether it continues--depends on whether

the perspective of slow work to provide a basis for proletarian reorganization inspires the minority. It depends on whether the minority sees the need to keep an anti-revisionist trend alive in the world today. It depends on whether the minority has enough in common in its dedication to Marxist communism, in its

idea of what a political trend consists of, and in its view of revolutionary prospects to have a common stand and activity.

(Condensed from Detroit #63 & 65, Dec. 3 & 5, 1994, which are the first two parts of a review of the last year.)

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On Ideology: On Looking Over the Revised Notes of the November Meeting

Neil, Los Angeles

I re-read these notes and one point that came out that I think needs further clarification.

It is the ideological aspect of the 'Party' question. Specifically, the supposed fatal flaws of the old MLP concerning its stance on pretty strict acceptance of (basic) tenets of Marxism and Leninism. This is put forward by some comrades as 'ideology'. Some comrades seem to think that the 'Party' counterpoised ideology to having a 'program'. This method tends to create confusion.

One can certainly debate the shortcomings that the old party had in developing a 'strict' written program and what should and should not be

put forward in the program, i.e., both for the short and longer term. But I think it is a big mistake to counterpoise 'program' to 'ideology'. In a revolutionary (and even reformist!) party which represents class interests, these elements should not be mutually exclusive. An effective party (or trend) must base its work on some kind of political and tactical program, however incomplete or flawed, and it will if it is to be taken seriously, base itself on some (in our case, ML) ideology. Yes, this means a firmer commitment and dedication obviously! But ideology is not neutral in the class struggle. Never was and never will be. And it is the rise of modern revisionism itself that challenged

party ideological discipline almost first and foremost.

There was a reason why too. Not just intellectualism either. In bourgeois (or semifeudal, etc.) society, the class battle is fought out on a number of fronts, yes mainly modern bourgeois states, ideology is a big part in day to day life, and the truth be known, sadly many good 'basic' working people do not even know when they are politically/economically bamboozled by the rich precisely because they are constantly being bombarded with bourgeois ideological pabulum from a young age! It comes in the most innocuous forms too! The family, the schools, the churches, the baseball and football games, the TV pro-

grams that many people are weaned on, etc. You don't need to hear Pat Buchanan, Ted Koppel, or Rush Limbaugh to get ruling class political and ideological rubbish shoved at you!

In fact the rich and their media have perfected the 'art.' How many workers today can even realize the brazen lies and distortions of the propagandists Dan Rather and Connie Chung. Yet not a week ago when discussing the alleged 'failed' social programs that are about to be massacred, Ms. Chung with straight face tells us (with a 'hit' list) that project Head Start (for pre-schoolers -- in fact an underfunded program that the bourgeois commentators admit works well but is grossly underfunded) is part of the Welfare expenditure!!! I'm saying that this is a big part of understanding ideological struggle in the modern world. displeased if they did!!

What I'm getting at is one has a far better chance of not getting dragooned into passivity or actually joining the fashionable 'Contract On America' chorus if one not only studies and actively defends working

class ideology, but also uses this knowledge to smoke out and attack this twaddle and outright crap in the course of active work in the class. Now I think it is plain about the importance of ideology as relates to the externals of politics.

But the internals related to the externals also needs more discussion. Look at history comrades, can anyone name one modern mass movement (revolutionary or reactionary) that was not guided by some world view? Especially for the revolutionary, because the goal is to eventually topple the old entrenched order, not sustain it in new forms, that a world view is even more important, not less! It is necessary to be very clear about this at this point.. In fact, our world view (any world view for that matter) is IDEOLOGY! We should not

be shamefaced about it either. The class battle is fought out on a number of fronts, yes, some more key than others at different stages of the struggles, the main fronts remain political, economic, cultural and IDEOLOGICAL! If we forget or mystify this, even at a stage when a new party must eventually be rebuilt, we will be far less effective than we can be in helping the movements grow. We must grasp the nature of the terrain of struggle scientifically, comprehending both the objective and SUBJECTIVE contradictions as well.

One of the many reasons that led to the dissolution of the old MLP was loss of 'ideological cohesion' and we must draw lessons from this. The view that ideology should not help guide the struggles is popular today in many circles, but it is also bourgeois, revisionist and wrong.

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SOME THOUGHTS ON THE INDIAN ECONOMY

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The so-called New Economic Policy has been put into practice in India. Following the New Economic Policy of liberalization, foreign capitals have been entering India in a big way. Privatization, decontrol, dilution of equity shareholding, even in the public sector, undertakings, joint ventures with foreign Capital Collaboration, entry of foreign capital and high technology, etc., have become the order of the day. Even business houses of Indian standard are quickly entering into mergers and agreements with the multinational giant companies and corporations.

What benefits will be derived by the Indian economy are doubtful, but it is beyond doubt that the foreign capitalists will earn a high return on their invested capital, especially due to the low level of wages of Indian laborers compared to wage levels in the advanced capitalist countries. The Indian economy, in the near future, will be under the hegemonistic control of Imperialist Capital. The Indian economy, in spite of its shortcomings and underdevelopment, is being integrated

with the world capitalist market and the world capitalist economy. No escape route is open for the Indian economy to get out of the clutches of the world capitalist economy.

Modern capitalism is not interested in having political control and rule over any country, but it is very much interested in having hegemonistic control over the economy and market thereto. Such economic control in due course will force the country to toe the political line of its master without protest; pressures and blockades are more powerful and effective than ordinary warfare. It is well-known that war effects are generally temporary, while the crippling of the economy will exert a long-term effect on the country as a whole.

President Saddam withstood the imperialist war thrust on Iraq by the USA and its allies in the name of liberation of Kuwait, but Iraq was ultimately forced to come to terms with the imperialist attackers because of the continued imperialist blockade imposed on it. Castro is bowing down before the USA due to

economic pressure and in order to seek financial help for reconstruction of Cuba's failing economy. By the New Economic Policy, the Indian capitalist state has voluntarily invited foreign domination and shackles over its economy. Uneven and unequal competition will surely destroy the small-scale and handcraft-based cottage industries. The big business houses have their eyes on the global market, and now they are totally indifferent to the needs of the Indian domestic markets and consumers.

The Indian government's all-out efforts are directed to export promotion. Exports are no doubt increasing, but there are not proportionate increases in earnings from exports. Imports are also registering a high increase. There is a growing pressure on the government for import of consumer goods for a section of new rich people who have enough money to spend on luxuries and foreign goods. India is still having adverse terms in its foreign trade.

The Indian government's policy is devoid of a

proper perspective and direction. Foreign exchange accumulations have reached an unprecedented height, but are lying almost idle. The foreign debts and servicing charges have become a great burden on the country's economy. The size of the debts are so great compared to the gross domestic product of the country that there is a likelihood of India being dragged into a "death trap" and vicious circle, which will be very difficult for India to get out of, even in the distant future.

Most of the economists in the country are in one of another way beneficiaries of the present government, and they have jumped on the bandwagon of government propaganda which says that the country has been rapidly moving on the path of development. The path chartered by the government for economic development and growth is no doubt a capitalist path with free and unbridled rights to Indian and international foreign capitals, but the pains and sufferings involved therein have to be squarely borne by the poor, exploited and oppressed Indian toiling masses.

The government, by its taxation and other policies, places the actual burden of taxation on the shoulders of the poor toiling masses mainly through imposition of indirect taxation. The oppressive state

machinery is being continuously expanded and strengthened at the costs of the welfare of the poor masses, who will be ultimately coerced and oppressed by the brute state forces to protect the capitalist exploitation. The government, along with the media and the intellectuals, has been crying itself hoarse to convince the people that the country is steadfastly moving towards rapid economic development, and that the New Economic Policy has set up a correct and proper stage and perspective for development.

The government is recklessly promoting the export of all goods and services. It is, therefore, no wonder that even rice, vegetables, fruits, onions, garlic, etc., are not spared, but are being heavily exported, causing shortages and a rise in prices thereof in the domestic markets with no concern to the government, but at the peril of poor domestic consumers.

The New Economic Policy has set in progress structural changes and reorganization of the industries. Lots of employed persons are being regularly thrown out of their present employment. Avenues of new employment are closed, with a bleak prospect of revival in the future. The Voluntary Retirement Scheme, the Golden Hand Shake Policy, forced declaration of surplus workmen, etc.,

have become the order of the day, and the obvious consequences thereof have been loss or diminution of income per family unit which, in turn, decreased the income of others, whose economies depend on the expenditures of others.

Mounting mass unemployment, inflation, rise in the prices of essential commodities, sky-high house rent, lack of fresh employment opportunities, etc., have baffled the poor toiling masses about the economic goals of government planning and the purported achievements of economic prosperity as claimed by government and non-governmental organizations. The people do not understand the manipulated statistical data showing various successes of the Union and State Governments in their so-called developmental projects. The common people assess the situation from their day-to-day life experiences in the market and at their residences. Their bitter experiences have made them apolitical and indifferent to the broad interests of the country as a whole, presumably because they have realized that governmental policies and planning are directed to benefit the Indian and foreign capitalists only, to the exclusion of the country and the poor of the society. This is a dangerous portent since they have not developed working class consciousness and, hence, a tendency may be developed in

the future towards the growth of Nazism. The government is fast losing its credibility and the common people are losing faith in the existing political system.

Frustrations have taken a deep-seated grip over the people. Corruption, nepotism, bribery, etc. are especially rampant in high offices and also at all levels of the society. The bureaucrats are not only corrupt and inefficient, but also have become dangerous due to their association with the ruling parties, mafias and the ministers. Political patronages are showered by the ruling parties on the corrupt bureaucrats, mafias, sycophants, smugglers, black marketers, profiteers and drug-traffickers. So far as the common people are concerned, they are insecure in all respects at the hands of the administrators. Law enforcement is a farce to them, excepting oppression on the people on false and flimsy pretexts.

Even after forty-seven years of Independence, the basic problems of the poor toiling masses have not been solved, even a bit, but have become more unbearable and complicated. Food, clothing, pure drinking water, shelter, education, transport, etc., are not sufficiently available to poor people or within the reach of their purchasing capacity.

Money wages have no doubt increased, but real wages in terms of purchasing capacity and prices of goods have not appreciably increased; rather in many cases they have fallen. Poor people have been forced to curtail their expenditures on basic necessities of life and are even unable to provide the required quantities of milk and nutritious foods to the children. Budgetary expenditures on health and education have not been increased in terms of the total budgetary amounts. The allotments have been insignificant, compared to even the minimum needs calculated on the basis of the size of the population.

The low purchasing capacities of the vast mass of the population have kept the size of the domestic market small, which is restricting the indigenous growth of the types of industries and products. India's traditional industries like jute, textiles, etc. are almost dying or on the verge of closure if not already closed. The growth of new types of industries related to petrochemicals, electronics, etc. are based on capital-intensive technology and machinery, which would provide few jobs to the growing labor force. Poor toiling masses will not have many opportunities to use the produce of such new industries because of their meager income, which is spent mainly on food items neces-

sary for bare subsistence of life.

The Indian economy is still lopsided and also suffering from regional disparities. Rural areas are practically devoid of industries. Industries in the urban areas are almost sick industries; they are suffering from management deficiencies, lack of capital and infrastructural facilities, lack of demand, etc.

The recent growth of export-based industries has brought in inflationary tendencies from advanced capitalist countries, and India will suffer greatly whenever there will be recessionary conditions in the advanced capitalist countries.

A study of the international market and foreign trade shows that the underdeveloped, poor countries and the developing countries have been selling their products, which are mainly primary products and light manufacturing goods at a low price, along with a sliding scale due to fierce competition amongst themselves and the manipulative control exerted by the advanced capitalist countries on the international market. But the advanced capitalist countries sell their products and capital goods always at a high price to the underdeveloped and developing countries, who are bound to purchase these in order to develop their economies. India is not exempt from this situation

and has been suffering heavily.

The General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) has been signed by India with much fanfare showing the benefits that will accrue therefrom. It was shown that world trade would be free from restrictions and that India would get a global market for its products. India has been forced to open its market for the benefits of the advanced capitalist countries and their products. An instance will suffice to prove the futility of India's claim. India is a great exporter of textile goods, but all sorts of restrictions, including quotas, have been fixed by the USA against textile goods to the detriment of India's interests.

The government in its new economic policy has permitted foreign capital to repatriate profit earned in India out of the country, and the repercussion thereof will be very adverse for India. To facilitate this, India has made its currency flexible and convertible.

The investment of foreign capital will be mainly in urban areas of India, which will invariably further increase the rural-urban and regional disparities. India cannot expect a balanced growth of its economy through investment of private foreign capital.

The Indian currency has lost its own direction and

is being increasingly guided, controlled, directed and supervised by the IMF, World Bank, etc., which are controlled by advanced capitalist countries. It is no wonder that those imperialist-controlled world financial institutions are now in full praise for India and its New Economic Policy. At their insistence, India, in the near future, will have to give free hand to Indian and foreign capitals to manage and control the production, distribution, pricing and consumption of their products.

Economic interdependence in the world of modern capitalism is inevitable, and world capitalism is bent upon building the world economy after its own image and pattern. India's New Economic Policy has brought too much dependance on international monopoly capital for its so-called economic development. Such a situation will place India on a neo-colonial status in this imperialist age of world capitalism. Hegemonic control over the Indian economy will definitively have political implications contrary to the interests of the poor toiling masses.

Acting with the framework of the Indian capitalist state, the trade unions are unable even to protect economic interests and job security of the workers. Indian economic development requires further sacrifices from the workers

who have been compelled to accept wage cuts, more burden of work, higher output with lesser work force, etc. India's so-called new economic progress represents a gloomy picture to the workers in the future.

In India, the bourgeois, being non-revolutionary and reformist-collaborationist in character, until now have failed to carry forward the land reforms to their logical end. Until now, all the actual tillers of the soil have not been able to obtain ownership and control over the land or the produce thereof. The increasing use of mechanized means of cultivation and commercialized cultivation have created a class of new rich in rural India. Agricultural employment has been shrinking. The process of increase in number of landless laborers is continuing unabated. The migration of labor from the villages to the cities in search of employment has been going on.

The social tension due to sharp income disparities is increasing. Income disparities between urban and rural areas have not narrowed. Within the society, whatever incomes were generated due to development were cornered by those who were already rich. The benefits of development did not trickle down to the grass roots level of society, but was lost in bureaucratic corruption and grabbed up by

the ministers, middlemen, contractors, traders, etc.

The government, for a long time, has been claiming substantial rises in agricultural production, but in real life the poor toiling people have to pay more every time they purchase cereals and other food grain items. Even the government-controlled Public Distribution Systems have been systematically increasing the prices of the commodities. Food production increased at a higher rate than the population growth, but even so there have been regular increases in prices. The government's subsidies are benefitting only the rich peasants, who have been further benefitted by the several increases made in the procurement prices of commodities including foodgrains, sugar cane, etc.

Industrialists and manufacturers have been given various benefits, including tax relief by the government, while the government has advised the workers to increase production at all costs, waiving all their economic demands for the present. In the government and in the public sector undertakings alike, several schemes have been started to reduce the present workforce in the name of surplus and other pleas. New recruitments, even against retirements and vacant posts, have been stopped for a long time.

Statistical jugglers are concealing the actual state of affairs of the economy, but the economic prospects are gloomy and bleak. The new economic policy does not hold out any hope for the poor toiling masses, who find themselves in a complicated situation, without any prospect of relief in the future.

Malnutrition, semi-starvation, lack of hygienic conditions of living, etc. have been ruining lives of the poor masses. It is no wonder that India has got the largest number of blind people and illiterates in the world. Per capita income of people in India is below that of Sri Lanka. India's economic development stands below even that of Pakistan.

No change in government will be able to solve any of the burning economic problems. No problem can be solved within the existing framework of the capitalist state structure.

The promises made by the Congress Left and Rightist parties to solve the present economic ills of India are nothing but representative of the hallmark of their falsehood and their subservience to the capitalist system and state, which they all intend to serve at the costs of the poor toiling masses. They all pretend to protect the best interests of the country, which to them means only the interests of the ex-

ploiting capitalist class. They all preach politics devoid of working class interests. Their class collaborationist policies in action benefit only the capitalist class as a whole.

Nothing short of a working class revolution contemplated by a revolutionary proletarian platform can create a condition for congenial economic development for the benefit of the poor exploited oppressed toiling masses of India.

Militant working class and mass struggles are needed, since the present struggles are mock fights staged to create a vote bank for bourgeois politicians.<>

PALESTINE REVISITED

Mark Replies to Jason --

On Jason's 'Seattle #75':

REFORMIST PANACEAS CRASH ON THE ROCKS OF REALITY

In May of 1994, Jason put forward views on the Palestinian-Israeli situation in which he stated his desire to challenge "certain long-held assumptions about international aid, as well as the role of zionism, which are, in my eyes at least, being proved suspect through the development of the current situation in Israel and Palestine." In line with his "new" ideas, Jason concocted an elaborate scheme for the development of the newly-created Palestinian "mini-state" whereby the Israeli zionist bourgeoisie and international imperialism would bring the good life to the Palestinian masses.

He even tried to show how the Israeli settlements, based on the robbery of Palestinian land and resources in the West Bank and Gaza, were really a god-send for the Palestinians. In June, Jason further elaborated his theories, arguing that Israel would become peace-loving because "to have a huge military regime" and to "be a modern state" were "two mutually exclusive types of state(s)."

It's been over eight months since Jason began to release

his views. The tumultuous events in the mini-state and the occupied territories over this time have been a test for Jason's theories. Do they demonstrate the validity of his reformist analysis, of his opposition to a revolutionary critique of Israel, imperialism and the Israeli-PLO accords? Do they show the Palestinian toilers should put their faith in their long-time oppressors and their new junior partners running the mini-state? Or do they show, as Jason's revolutionary critics have been pointing out, that the class issues have assumed ever-more importance in the Palestinian struggle?

How have Jason's theories stacked up? Have the international financiers poured in money to uplift the poor? No. Most of the aid has been held up.

Has Israel become the helpful "good neighbor"? No. The robbery of Palestinian land continues with new settlements. The zionist authorities have periodically cut off Palestinian workers from their jobs in Israel. Unemployment and poverty are growing worse.

And what of the promises of peace? Israeli police continue to gun down Palestinian protesters with impunity. Not to be outdone, the Palestinian authority police have attempted to curtail protest against Israel, leading to the horrendous massacre of demonstrators in Gaza in November. And just to let the Palestinian police know who's still the big boss, Israeli police recently opened fire on Palestinian police. Jason's daydreaming about the new nature of imperialism and zionism has shown itself to be an unremitting nightmare.

Jason continues to run from reality

Jason always boasts that his views are based on "reality" while his opponents are just empty-headed phrase mongers. So let's see how he reacts to *this* dose of reality. In his December 29, 1994 article, Jason admits that all sorts of terrible things are going on, that there is a "slow strangulation of the PNA (Palestinian National Authority)," etc. But does this give him the slightest pause about his previous assertions about the wonderful things that would come about

from imperialism and zionism? Not on your life.

Jason reasons that "despite such a bleak picture, certain favorable conditions exist. One is that international aid, as it was originally planned, was both relatively generous, and without many of the usual strings of austerity these institutions normally include as conditions of aid. The amounts that were announced were actually about as much as the territories were capable of absorbing." What touching faith in the imperialist financiers! Why they want to shower all the riches on the Palestinians that they could possibly use. Better hold some up or there will be too many jobs, too high wages, too many schools, too much housing!

The other "favorable condition" according to Jason is "Israel is interested in investing in the West Bank." Jason admits that "such investment would obviously be advanced for the purposes of allowing the Israeli bourgeoisie to advance their interests". But for Jason, what's good for the zionist occupiers is good for the Palestinian masses. He ignores that Israel's interests are for the mini-state to be a tiny, slave-wage sweatshop, not some kind of economic wonder for the Palestinians. Through Jason's rose-colored glasses, however, all he can see is a wondrous world of

"increased employment," "the long-term building of a Palestinian industrial/agricultural base" and how "advantageous for the Palestinians as a whole" Israeli investment will be.

Now let's come down from Jason's fantasy world and get another picture of what Israeli development of the occupied territories has historically been like. One author describes this development as "choking off development in the Territories so as to provide both a captive market for Israeli goods and a cheap labor force." Who penned such an unflattering picture? Jason -- in the very same December 29 document promoting the wonders of development hand-in-hand with Israel! Indeed, Israel has been promoting development in their own interests in the occupied Palestinian lands for a long time. And if we judge things by the last several decades of actual historical *reality*, and not Jason's fantasies, it is not a pretty sight. Israeli development has largely consisted of robbing the land and resources of the Palestinians to create Israeli settlements. It has consisted of wanton plunder, backed up by the iron fist of the Israeli armed forces and the paramilitary settlers.

Jason won't contest the past "choking" or the present "strangulation." The only problem is he never learns anything from it. Instead he

paints smiley faces on the stranglers and tells us don't worry, they'll be good boys in the future. And so his admission of the ruinous consequences of past Israeli development has not dissuaded him from becoming an apologist for the Israeli settlements. In his December 29 article he once again tells us that only "military" settlements must go, and this is "a small minority of the settlers overall." Of course, the idea that the rest of the settlements are detached from Israeli militarism is a farce for they owe their *origin* and continued existence to the Israeli armed forces and the paramilitary settlements.

Why, according to Jason, when Israel does bad things, that has nothing to do with the real interests of the zionist bourgeoisie. He imagines that good deeds for the Palestinian toilers are really in the interests of these career criminals. Thus he considers that when Israel is exerting economic pressure and pressing Arafat to crackdown on the masses it means Israel "is shooting itself in the foot." And he advises the zionist rulers that they "cannot allow the situation to continue without an increase in attacks on Israel." Yes Jason, Israel must be peaceful or those nasty Palestinians will be attacking it. I'm sure the Israeli generals will beat their swords into plowshares any day now.

Neither the entire history of Israeli domination over the Palestinian masses nor the present-day events have any real bearing on Jason's conclusions about imperialism and zionism. He has decided that it's inevitable that they are forces for good and no amount of facts will get in the way. Jason's "realism" simply consists of adjusting himself to the basic status quo, of glorifying oppression.

Minor tinkering instead of real change

This sort of "realism" is reflected in Jason's proposed solution to the present debacle in the Palestinian mini-state and the rest of the occupied territories. According to Jason, "there is no point in spending time complaining that they (the Israel-PLO accords -- Mk) are stacked in Israel's favor" because they are "a fact." This is typical of Jason's general approach to the world. Once he declares something a fact, then there is no point in trying to significantly change things. Just go with the flow. Since the accords exist, they must be accepted. And since they must be accepted, Jason's plan does not go beyond some minor tinkering with the admittedly rotten deal and pretending this will lead to some glorious results.

For example, Jason plays up his alleged concern for

"democratization of the PNA." He complains bitterly about how undemocratic Arafat's administration is. But with his "realistic" politics, what does this amount to? His first idea on "democratization" is to keep the Arafat administration in power! As Jason puts it: "From a tactical angle, it is difficult to simply demand their ouster, as this will not be accomplished short of a violent civil war." In other words, since the PNA will not peacefully step down, then there is no alternative but to accept its dictatorship. Jason says the Arafat cabal has "all the political instincts of the Czar." But Arafat's Czarist instincts are enough to cow down Jason.

But wait! Jason can fix things. All you have to do is "advance the slogan that other forces, of which there are many of a secular nature, be appointed to the government. Some of these will be better accountable to the masses." Now here's an exciting prospect for democracy. Take a Czarist regime and add a few slightly less repressive (well, some of them anyway) people and voila, we have the "democratization of the PNA". Not only that. "It will also allow the Intifada to increase its ability to press the PNA to take specific stands vs. other actors, such as the Israelis." Only in Jason's dream world can you have a government that agrees to collaborate with

Israeli oppression and, at the same time, helps advance the struggle against itself and the zionist ruling class. No wonder Jason is unable to tell us who these "other forces" are who can accomplish such miracles!

Jason's describes his other path to democracy: "local elections insure accountability on day-to-day issues that no other process will at this time." Of course, there should be local elections. And it's possible that some more competent local bureaucrats get elected. But the real power will still reside with Czar Arafat. The national administration will be the ones involved in deciding overall development plans and financing, relations with Israel, negotiations of water rights, control the mini-state army, etc. The local bureaucrats will only operate within these parameters. So the basic miserable situation faced by the Palestinian masses will remain. The national authority will exercise its dictate in collaboration with Israel. Economic deprivation will still be rampant. Democracy will remain quite limited.

If Jason wants some real "accountability," he should concentrate on building up a powerful struggle against the mini-state authority, not grovel before it. A democratic electoral system should certainly be a part of such a move-

ment's demands. Such a system could increase the masses' ability to participate in political life and could provide a forum for parties representing the interests of the toilers. But elections can only be an adjunct to building the mass struggle, not replace its necessity.

Obscuring the class nature of the Islamic fundamentalists

Another issue with the elections is what happens if the Islamic fundamentalists come to power? Since Jason considers defense of the mini-state authority to be paramount, he does not call for a struggle to bring down even an Islamic rule. Instead he whistles past the graveyard. He doubts that Palestinians will "freely hand them (their rights -- Mk) over to religious fanatics given a democratic choice where they are only one of several options" because "that sort of thing flourishes best amongst a poorly educated people with no democratic traditions and little political sophistication." Of course the liberals of Germany said the same thing about Hitler coming to power. Meanwhile, Jason himself claims that Hamas' policies have "endeared them to a section of the Palestinian masses" and their ideology "has a powerful appeal."

And while Jason doubts Palestinians would elect

Hamas, he does his best to prettify them. He gets upset with me for pointing out that "Hamas represents the Islamic fundamentalist section of the bourgeoisie and would like, for now at least, a share of the power and privileges the PLO has." He says this is an attempt to "reduce Hamas' motivations down to that of a venal, corrupt bourgeoisie strata" and doesn't recognize that most of Hamas' flaws are "ideological." Well, I hadn't talked about how "venal" or "corrupt" Hamas was. It is Jason who tries to make the degree of corruptness the central issue. This allows him to dodge the question of what class interests the Islamic fundamentalist organizations represent. In fact, he points with pride how his analysis contradicts the idea of "class issues primary, everything else secondary." Jason thinks the main issue is whether the personal motivation of some Islamic fundamentalist leader is to amass a fortune, not that Hamas represents one section of bourgeois class tyranny trying to displace the present bourgeois regime. And by obscuring the class nature of Hamas, Jason winds up portraying the program of Hamas as little more than spiritual contemplation and kindly charity work.

The way Jason looks at things, Hamas' ideological concerns mean it won't defend the capitalist order whereas in

reality an Islamic regime will mean the most backward and suffocating sort of capitalist order. If the religious fanaticism of Hamas means they are not advancing a political agenda, then I suppose the Pope and the anti-abortion zealots have no political agenda either.

He is also quite enamored by the "network of social service organizations" of the Islamic fundamentalists for their "concrete support for Palestinians." Jason considers this evidence that Hamas is not corrupt and that which class interests it represents is a minor concern. Yes, some of the inadequate international relief aid goes through Hamas. But reactionaries have often used similar aid programs to buy a little good will while supporting social orders of extreme oppression. Indeed, Jason himself noted the narrow political infighting among all the groups distributing aid in his May 10 document. There he states that "charity operations are seen as the territory of one particular faction," for example, "administrators are pressured to hire workers of one particular group" and "control over limited resources is becoming more important than what uses are made of the resources." Doesn't sound like mere disinterested charity, does it? But for Jason, the main thing is that Hamas doesn't have as many luxury cars as Arafat's cronies.

Jason's distorted view of class analysis

By detaching their ideological "flaws" from their class basis, Jason assists Hamas in presenting itself as an organization of the downtrodden. He just scoffs at the class analysis of Hamas as "class reductionism." For Jason, there are just a lot of different oppressions that "operate simultaneously and in a totally intertwined manner." But he avoids the fact that the root cause of all these forms of oppression are various class interests and that different class interests are the underlying cause of different trends within each form of struggle against oppression. Hence when Jason hears about class analysis being applied to, say, national oppression or women's oppression, he can only imagine it to mean obliterating all distinctions between various forms of oppression, of reducing things to absurdity.

In fact in his June article, Jason says flat out that he considers Marxism an inadequate tool for analysis, arguing that it is "only one of many useful tools when looking at non-class (race and gender) questions" and is a "dismal failure" "on questions dealing with an individual's spiritual needs." Of course since Jason classifies radical Islamic fundamentalism as basically "cultural oppression,"

it is no wonder he considers pointing out the class nature of Hamas to be a dismal failure, as "not the way to examine the threat they pose." Marx was well known for pointing out the underlying basis of religious conflicts in Europe several centuries ago was the clash between rising capitalism and the old feudal order. But Jason, who assures the world it is the stand of his opponents that "actually misses the essence of the way Marx used dialectical and historical materialism," can dismiss class interests by referring to religious motivations.

A theory for restricting the struggle

As we have seen, no matter how much the Palestine mini-state authority cracks down on the masses, Jason supports it, albeit with a cosmetic face-lift. Yet, at the same time, Jason wants to pose as the greatest proponent of the struggle of the toilers. Indeed he fumes at anyone who would suggest that his views would encourage the masses to "wait passively for things to change". Now why would someone get that idea, Jason? Just because you promoted a glorious picture of Palestinian development under Israeli domination or continue to tout the alleged generosity of the international financiers? Or maybe it was your discovery of the new economic law that will lead to a peaceful

Israel? If imperialism and Israel are as wonderful as Jason portrays them, any sensible person would see no point in fighting them.

But perhaps we have been unfair to Jason. After all, in Section 3, point #2 of his December article, Jason has a list of all sorts of struggles and declares that they are "all absolutely essential to wage simultaneously." But it's all for show as one struggle after another is sacrificed on the alter of his "statehood framework." Let's see how each of the five struggles he lists is rendered impotent by this framework.

Number "5." is "the Palestinians vs. international donors, e.g. the IMF, and the Palestinians vs. Arab capital." Jason says these struggles must be placed "on the 'back burner'." Presumably you mustn't do anything to jeopardize all the great riches about to be showered on the mini-state. And too many workers' struggles and social demands makes for a bad investment climate.

Struggle number "2." is "the Palestinians vs. the Palestinian National Authority, as it is presently constructed." With the proviso "as it is presently constructed" Jason's fight against the PNA is reduced to schemes to *maintain* the repressive authority like Jason's

idea to add a few appointees to it.

Moving along. Struggle number "3." is "the Palestinian toilers vs. the Palestinian bourgeoisie." So you can fight the bourgeoisie but not have a serious struggle against the bourgeois mini-state authority. But what of the development plans of the mini-state? Doesn't supporting the mini-state require seeing that its development plans succeed? Won't the Palestinian authority consider a militant workers' movement a threat to its efforts to develop capitalism? In his May document Jason himself worries that the workers demands must be limited by the demands of capitalist development. He states he is for "a progressive stand toward Palestinian workers while understanding the need for the capitalist development of the economy, etc." Whatever Jason thinks the above phrase means, it will be the opinion of the exploiters that counts. And it is highly likely that the exploiters and their state authority will consider most any worker demand that cuts into their profits as adversely affecting capitalist development.

Moreover, it is hard to believe that Jason can be for much of a fight against the Palestinian capitalists when he has put the struggle against foreign capital on the "back burner" and when he is excit-

ed about the combining of foreign capital (Israeli included) and the Palestinian economy.

Struggle number "4." is "the secular Palestinians vs. the Islamic fundamentalist Palestinians." Presumably, this is a call to oppose Islamic fundamentalism, although Jason isn't even quite sure of his attitude towards an Islamic state in Palestine. However, Jason is upset that anyone would call Hamas a bourgeois force. But criticism of religion stripped from its class basis cripples the ability of the critique to have appeal among the masses.

Finally, there is struggle number "1.": the Palestinians vs. the Israeli occupation." Jason prides himself on his support for the "intifada". But he also has given his blessings to the PLO-Israeli accords, part of which was agreement to clamp down on anti-Israeli protest. If he is really serious about building up the PLO mini-state authority, then he must agree to keeping the intifada in line.

Moreover, Jason has already ruled out the struggle against the vast bulk of Israeli robbery of land and resources. Only military outposts are bad, he says. But while Israeli settlers are allowed to make themselves at home, Jason does not support the right of repatriation for those Palestin-

ians who lost their homes, land and livelihood to Israeli terror. When it comes to Palestinians living in exile outside the occupied territories, he proclaims "there is simply no place for that many people." What next? Perhaps Jason will advise the black South Africans dispossessed of their farms and villages under the old apartheid system to give up their demands to get their land back. After all, don't the rich white farmers promote development? Aren't they mainly economic farms, not military farms?

After his list of struggles, Jason tells us "although it is necessary to talk about the individual struggles separately, nonetheless any strategy must be able to incorporate the different currents of struggle under an overall framework. My view is that that framework is the drive for Palestinian statehood." Let's all work for statehood, Jason says. But what state are we talking about? Are we talking about the tiny bantustan which has been granted the right of playing rent-a-cop for Israel? The state that lacks the normal sovereign rights of states? The state based on a deal that is an embarrassment even to the likes of Edward Said, a major figure of PLO national reformist politics? This is the state that Jason, despite his complaints against Arafat, is backing.

And what does it mean to incorporate all the separate struggles against oppression under this overall framework? Let's sum up what became of all the separate struggles. One is basically a call to save the repressive state with tinkering, one is on the "back burner" and the other three are supported in theory and undermined in practice. When it comes to struggle, Jason giveth and Jason taketh away. This is the great new theory Jason arrived at by replacing the class framework for examining the Palestinian struggle with his statehood framework. This is a new theory that winds up with the same basic features of the tired old theories of bourgeois nationalism.

Jason on organization

Besides the great new theory of anti-struggle, Jason offers some advice on how the Palestinian masses should organize. In Section 3, point 2c, he describes what he considers to be the problems that beset the organization of the intifada. At first, there were locally run groups that were "ad-hoc coalitions" based on "cooperation between factions." The intifada suffered though when leaders from outside began to issue orders to local leaders who "began to be recruited and controlled by different factions." Jason demands "returning of control to activists at the base." That's a good sentiment. But since

Jason avoids any analysis of the politics of the local or outside forces, his criticism amounts to railing against organized trends and "outsiders" in general. If Jason thinks the answer is returning to the days before the growth of political trends in the movement, then he is talking about the impossible. Mass movements of any significant duration are bound to give rise to political trends and clashes between them. And longing for a past where politics was supposedly unimportant will not solve anything.

Or maybe Jason is talking about "reinvigoration" of the movement by taking up his conception of struggle within the statehood framework. That should put the clamps on any motion in short order!

But there is a way that really will help revive the movement. That is the path of working to build up a trend representing the interests of the masses, a class trend distinct from, and in opposition to, the politics of the PLO and the Islamic groups. Only when the masses embark upon the path of establishing their own politics and organization will they be able to control their own destiny and make possible the reinvigoration of the base.

Mocking class organization

But every time Jason hears the notion of class organization he gets hysterical. In his December 29 document, for example, he mocks the concept as "blood-curdling threats to destroy Israel." And his articles keep up a steady drumbeat that my problem is that I don't realize Israel is not about to be overthrown soon, that it is not time to "storm the Knesset", etc. For Jason it is inconceivable that revolutionary organizing can and should take place even though the day of the overthrow of the zionist state is not at hand. The need for revolutionary organizing to move forward the battles of today while making the toilers conscious of the goals that are *not immediately* realizable is foreign to him. For Jason, there is either "storming the Knesset" or ridiculing the present-day tasks necessary to eventually achieve the grander goals like the overthrow of the zionist rulers. And this outlook has led Jason to abandon a revolutionary perspective for "realizable" pipedreams about the good life via the powers that-be.

In order to hide the fact that my call for revolutionary organizing is not based on illusions about the difficulties of struggle in this period, Jason hides my analysis of the difficulties. For instance, when Jason lists my quotes on

the value of class organization (from pages 8-9 of the CWVTJ of June 1, 1994) he somehow omits the following lines from right in the midst of those quotes: "None of these tasks are easy. They buck the present dominant political trends. As well, the death and destruction caused by Israel has exacted a heavy toll on the Palestinian toilers. The days of sweeping victories in organizing and winning the big demands are not just around the corner." The next line Jason quotes: "But embarking upon the path of class organization is the only way the Palestinian cause will move ahead." Doing revolutionary work in difficult times is what Jason deems empty "blood-curdling threats to destroy Israel."

Jason declares Marxism-Leninism irrelevant

A particular focus of Jason's attack on class organization is his scoffing at the thought that Marxism-Leninism can have influence among Palestinians. He terms the chances of this "simply non-existent." His first argument is that "the theory itself is in crisis". What this crisis consists of, Jason doesn't bother to tell us. But in his writings Jason consistently denounces the most basic Marxist precepts or attacks his fanciful distortions of them.

Examples of the former include his Seattle #65 where he denounces the "paradigm of revolution" including such "set-in-cement postulates" as "it (revolution -- Mk) was inevitable" or that "its motive force was the working class". Well, there is nothing left of Marxism without the idea that the working class will be the gravediggers of capitalism and establish socialism.

For one of the endless examples of the fanciful distortions, see how Jason distorts the Marxist idea of supporting the goal of socialism and seeing other revolutions as clearing the grounds for socialism into the idea that only if other revolutions turn into socialist revolutions, should they be supported. (Seattle #65, the same section on the "paradigm of revolution".) Or see how Jason converts Marx into an apologist for neo-conservative economics (discussed in my September 27 reply to Jason contained in the CWVTJ #5, p.24).

So Jason's first argument of why Marxism-Leninist influence is not possible is essentially that you should be against Marxist influence.

Jason's second argument is that before a Marxist-Leninist party can exist, "there would have to be a group or trend of radical intellectuals headed in that direction." Here once again, Jason the "Marxist"

simply caves in to the status quo. Under the banner that Israel is not going to be quickly overthrown, he scoffs at revolutionary organizing to eventually achieve that goal. Now, under the banner that a mass Marxist party is not around the corner, he thinks there is no point in working toward that goal. For Jason, it's fine to advocate Marxism when there's a big crowd around applauding. Else it's time to tuck your ideals away and seek sanctuary in painting lovely pictures of what life could be like under the present oppression. For Jason, it is enough to shout "the theory itself is in crisis" and declare the possibilities for Marxism-Leninism over. But if one is a Marxist, as Jason pretends to be, then the crisis means that there will be a debate about what comprises a revolutionary ideology, what Marxism really is, and how the Marxist principles apply in the present conditions.

Are there conditions present that will motivate the Palestinian masses to search for a theory of the revolutionary class struggle? Jason claims those supporting the building of class organization have views that are "not a creation of an actual analysis," show "little connection to the on-going situation" and are just "phrasemongering." But one would have to have their eyes shut tight to not see the general conditions that are

laying the basis for the influence of an ideology that can guide the revolutionary class struggle. We have been arguing that the deal between the Palestinian bourgeoisie and Israel to set up a repressive mini-state would mean that the class struggle would come more to the fore. We have pointed out that large sections of the masses want to continue the struggle against Israeli oppression against the wishes of the bourgeois mini-state authority. We have called attention to the class nature of the struggle against poverty in the occupied territories. We have spoken of the extreme exploitation of the masses that would remain, even if the mini-state stabilizes, and how the masses would have to fight against this. Meanwhile, even Jason acknowledges that activists at the base are getting fed up with established groups and that there is a need for a theory of struggle that is an alternative to the established trends (although Jason's statehood framework theory is hardly an alternative).

No one can say in advance how fast Marxism will take hold as a mass trend. But clearly the present situation in the Palestinian struggle puts the question of revolutionary theory on the agenda. If one can only see the present dominance of other trends, then inevitably there will be despair over revolutionary theory and collapse into

reformism. But if one opens their eyes to the entire reality, then one can also see how the present conditions are creating opportunities for Marxist influence. <>

Neil Replies to Jason --

In Seattle #75, Jason warns us that he is back. True, but this time not as an open ad-man for imperialist and Zionist apologetics on Palestine as before. He is promoting similar swindles but this time with a fake Marxist make-up job. Clever Jason!

Those who best exposed his political bankruptcy before are slandered as 'fundamentalists'. This of course HE means in the pejorative sense. But in a class partisanship sense however, we admit it is true we try to understand and apply the 'fundamentals' of scientific socialism. These 'fundamentals' Jason and his mentors have thrown completely overboard!

Jason now implies he kind of supports the dialectic method and materialist world outlook. Is this the same Jason that before mocked dialectical materialism for not allegedly comprehending and attending to the masses 'spiritual needs'?

Jason now claims to be a champion of the Palestinian

Intifada. Two major catches however. 1) The Palestinian toilers should have nothing to do with reconstruction of a Marxist vanguard party and 2) Should keep their struggle within acceptable bounds lest the philanthropic Zionists and G7 marauders not deliver the sea of economic/technological 'aid' they have promised-no strings attached.

Jason writes he is in support of a independent Palestinian 'nation-state'. One allegedly free of class and social oppression. He thinks this will happen as the capital and technology is showered upon the land by the powers that be. Jason, the 'Marxist', has manna from his new gods of capital, the World Bank and the IMF. If Jason is correct, Capitalism can best the miracles of the bible! Start with Exodus 16:14-36 sayeth prophet Jason! Why bother with the fundamentals of Marxism!

Of course, our Seattle sophist slurs right over the obvious. At the minimum, capitalist investment and aid, Jason's manna from 'heaven' only has a possibility of coming if the aims of the Palestinian Intifada are ground down and crushed. Jason cannot have it both ways.

Jason has a liberal's view of capital investment. He is wrong! Capital is only invested where it can derive a reasonable profit to the

capitalists--and imperialists. Now obviously this means the delivery of the Palestinian masses to exploiters, politically and socially prostrate so as to assure the rich that 'reasonable profit' rates are assured, come hell or high water ! This means also repression and labor skinning, not just 'democracy' and jobs as liberal Jason promises. Jason talks of more employment as does Dan Rather or Connie Chung. 'Employment' is the jargon 100% of the time. Exploitation never!

Jason the ad-man promises the 'international aid...was both relatively generous' and 'without many of the usual strings of austerity these institutions normally include as conditions of aid.' It is for good reason our sophist here hides the names of these 'institutions'. Need a loan, just keep the peace, chill out, see your local IMF office and World Bankster, billions available-no strings attached! Jason says this is not unreasonable because Palestine has its limits on 'absorbing' the 'no strings attached aid'. Of course Jason is almost AWOL in discussing the historical and present day reasons for these limitations.

Jason the developer tells us his plan on which Israeli settlements are not to be up-rooted based on the economic necessities of the new 'nation-state'. Now lets see if I

got it right. Mark puts forward the need for the Palestinian toilers to develop their own revolutionary class and social organizations and Jason shrieks epithets. But when Jason advises the Palestinians that they need Israeli settlements, he is Mr. Innocence and benevolence!

Jason swears he is a Marxist. He then heaps scorn on those who want revolutionary groups & parties to be developed internationally. Jason may well be an admirer of Marx. But it is not Karl, maybe Groucho or Chico!

The yellow line running through Seattle #75 is strange. Jason is all for capital investment and claims there will be no strings attached by the rich. Oxymoron maybe? He bellows against his detractors who want the Palestinians (and Israeli workers) to defend themselves politically with a class party. Hmmm. Strange marxism this!

Jasons present line is like the rehash of the bankrupt theories of the social democrat R. Hilferding before WW1. He too glorified and prettified (European) monopoly investment schemes. Hilferding thought that monopolist capital export schemes would moderate the danger of crises in the metropolises. He said that the 'socialization aspect' would speed up the task of overcoming capitalism. But the oppor-

tunist Hilferding was more honest than Jason as he at least admitted that the weak countries would probably become the future battlefields of the great powers. (1) R. Hilferding, Finance Capital, 1910.

Jason has advice to Israel as well. Throw Arafat's PNA a few more bones before their whole bantustan like arrangement collapses. But why is the 'Marxist' Jason giving them advice? It is because these are the 'powers that be' and according to majorityite petty bourgeois logic and pragmatism, these elements must not be fought against or overthrown. All collaborative schemes are aimed at working with these forces so they will stop shooting themselves in the foot'.

How Jason's majorityite politics creep out so often. This outlook toward the capitalist states on a world scale ('They are here, they are not going away soon!') extends to the USA as well with Jason and co. They don't think working people need a revolutionary marxist party HERE either. To this impotent 'trend', Capitalists can have 2, 3, 4, 5, parties, the sky is the limit. Let revolutionaries try to help build one anywhere and they go ballistic. That is majority logic. A real level class battle field for wage workers and their allies!

Jason's 'gems' never seem to stop. Who is to blame for the savage oppression of the Palestinian working people? According to the 'marxist' Jason, 'The truth is everyone's to blame....'(Sec3 subSec.2F--b). Yes Jason, we all need to cleanse our souls now and get right with the lord before, especially we revolutionaries- are condemned to HELL! Your spiritualism at work here Jason?

More 'Gems' of wisdom appear in Sec3 /subSec.2 where Jason advises that 'elections' will be an easy method 'for ousting Arafat supporters' in the democratization of the PNA. He avers that elections are 'one of the processes that genuine nation-states engage in'. Not one criticism of the class nature of these elections or their limitations for the struggles of the oppressed is uttered by the 'marxist' Jason!

In Sec3 subSec2--b, Jason tries to pull a fast one by limiting the 40 year Palestinian fight as one for 'elementary democratic rights'. This is a big part of their just cause. But Marxists also point out the toilers struggles have also been for political, economic and social rights that go potentially beyond bourgeois democracy, or anything the bosses, Israeli, British, American, French, Russian, and yes, in the end Palestinian, are about to grant them without

feverish struggle and that means class political as well as economic organization must be built up.

Finally, in Sec3 subSec.2-F-b, Jason harps on yet again with more of his spiritualist twaddle. On the issue of repatriation, Jason assures us that this will be no problem after all, the Israelis (zionist institutions and govt?-NC)'have a moral obligation to repatriate some (!-NC) of these individuals'. Jason's 'marxist' mask is also been blown into the skies. This semi-religious prattle about the morals of the zionists is nothing but a cover-up for terrorist oppression and profitable exploitation of Palestinian working people by imperialism and the gendarme, zionist Israel. Promoters of 'universal' a-class morals under class rule are nothing but apologists for the 'morals' of the dominant existing order and Jason's Seattle #75 document on the Mid-East struggle offers abundant proof of that!

The working class in struggle develops its own class morality!<>

Tim Replies to Jason --

IS A MARXIST TREND IMPOSSIBLE IN THE PALESTINIAN STRUGGLE?

Mark has answered Jason's

"Reply to Detroit 55, 57" quite well, I think. I would only like to add a few comments.

Jason asserts that Mark's call to Palestinian working people to build class struggle organizations is "class reductionist". This would be true if Mark had advised them to ignore all the concrete realities of the national struggle, the fight against PLO betrayal and Islamic fundamentalism, and had urged them to focus only on the trade union struggle and the socialist revolution. But this was not the case. Mark, to the contrary, called on them to build their class organizations for the purpose of fighting most thoroughly, to a finish, all the national and cultural struggles which are intertwined with their open class battles, to utilize the force of the working people to win as much democracy, as full a national liberation, as possible while preparing the socialist revolution. This is not "class reductionism"; this is Marxism. Jason has built a straw man of vulgar Marxism and called it Mark. But this is natural for someone who has entirely abandoned the perspective the working class, who calls judging the national struggle through a classprism "fundamentalism."

Jason has switched from his old stand on the side of the Palestinian masses to a stand on the side of the bour-

geoisie. He so much as says so: his framework is not the class struggle of the proletariat, not the national struggle waged most vigorously due to the independence and eventual leadership of the toilers' organizations within it; instead, Jason's framework is "the drive for Palestinian statehood." He sees this not just as the present phase of the Palestinian struggle but as "a hegemonic device to unite the largest amount and the most active section of Palestinians at the base against the most severe roadblocks..." This is not a Marxist perspective; this is a perspective of conceding hegemony in the national struggle to the bourgeoisie. All the Palestinian nationalist bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie for the past thirty years and more have proclaimed this as their framework and have used it as a "hegemonic device" to keep the Palestinian toilers under their leadership. Jason aims this "hegemonic device" squarely at the toilers ("the base"). In Jason's opinion, the Palestinian toilers cannot, in the foreseeable future, build class organizations or a Marxist-Leninist party, so obviously they cannot challenge the Palestinian bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie for the leadership of the struggle. (In fact, Jason thinks the masses cannot even hope to elect the leadership of the Palestinian National Authority!) So Jason's "hegemonic device" of the national struggle proves to

be the hegemony of the bourgeoisie. Clamoring against "reductionism" like a trendy "post-modern" intellectual, Jason reduces himself to calling on the Palestinian toilers to follow the big shots. It seems it is he who wants to "reduce" the working people to mere followers, pawns, of the big sellout players.

Falling into a bourgeois nationalist perspective, it is quite natural for Jason to denigrate Mark's call for class organization of the toilers. In fact, Jason's nationalism is so narrow that he never once considers the possibility of any anti-Zionist mobilization among the Israeli masses. While the Jewish workers are clearly still under the control of the Zionist labor bureaucracy, there has been significant motion in Israeli society in an anti-occupationist direction. Any radical Palestinian force will certainly have to take this motion into account and try to encourage it and move it to the left, to appeal to the Jewish workers to come out against Zionist chauvinism and imperialism in class solidarity with the Palestinian workers. This may seem impossible to Jason, but then the American student, anti-war, and Black liberation movements of the 1960's and the mass radicalization they led to would have seemed impossible to Jason had he been asked to imagine it in, say, 1959.

Finally, the core of Jason's denial of the role of the Palestinian toilers is his flat-out refusal to consider any possibility that they can develop a Marxist-Leninist trend and party to lead them in an independent class direction. Jason gives two reasons for this: one, that Marxism itself is in crisis; and, two, that there is no trend in the territories of radical intellectuals headed towards Marxism-Leninism.

Let's take the first question. Marxism has been in crisis before; in fact, it so frequently goes into crisis that it seems that it cannot develop without crises. And that is how Marx predicted its development in the famous quote in 18th Brumaire on how the proletarian revolution criticizes, derides, in effect "de-constructs" itself over and over only to rise again each time yet stronger. That is what is going on now, both in the field of theory and in politics and organization. It's too bad Jason is not participating in it from the side of the proletariat, because it is exciting indeed.

Faced with a tangled Gordian knot of new and old questions, Jason has dropped the sword of Marxism and is whining that the sword is "in crisis." It'll really get rusty if you don't use it, but if you chop away at the knots that sword will gleam brightly. In fact, Jason's knotty arguments

have been chopped apart by Mark's Marxist arguments, but to Jason this crisis-born clash is something terrible and only proves that Palestinians cannot build a Marxist-Leninist organization.

Secondly, while Jason may be right that there does not now exist a movement of radical Palestinian intellectuals (or workers) moving towards Marxism-Leninism, there are a number of other factors which make such a development not entirely far-fetched. Foremost is the ongoing mass struggle in the territories, which is giving the masses great experience in struggle and is unmasking Arafat and the PNA and causing the masses to look for new leaders. It will also put Hamas to the test. In such times of rebellion, the masses learn very quickly.

The long-standing hold of the secular nationalist bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie over the struggle is crumbling. The Islamic bourgeoisie wants to take its place but that hasn't been settled yet. Schooled in vigorous struggle, the Palestinian masses also have a high level of culture and education and a cosmopolitanism gained from living through revolutionary theory is advanced among them, they will be able to grasp it very quickly. Communism, contrary to the impression you would get from Jason, has long been a trend in Palestinian politics,

though it has been generally overshadowed

Many of the 60's-70's generation of Palestinian youth identified themselves as communists and Marxists and joined guerrilla organizations that claimed to be Marxist. When, in the U.S. in the late 60's and early 70's, the American Communist Workers Movement (Marxist-Leninist) and later the Central Organization of U.S. Marxist-Leninists took communist literature among the Palestinian workers in Cleveland and Detroit, we were received with great friendliness and were invited to all the Arab mass meetings.

Two of my Palestinian friends who died in that period, one in the civil war in Lebanon and the other an apparent suicide in Youngstown out of despair over the setbacks in the struggle, were passionately for communism, though by no means theoretically clear about it. The struggle against all forms of revisionism faces Palestinian radicals just as it does others, but such a struggle would not be the foreign invasion Jason claims it to be.

In sum, there are some factors that favor the emergence of a proletarian revolutionary perspective among the Palestinian masses, in contrast to Jason's entirely negative picture. It seems to me that the secular nationalist leader-

ship is in deep crisis, the masses are in ferment and the Islamic fundamentalists are moving to take over the movement. It is at just such a time that revolutionaries should put forward a secular revolutionary perspective, not the reformist sham proposed by Jason (his reformism is well-documented by Mark) which can be easily discredited (but not scientifically exposed) by Islamic militants. Such a perspective will be new, revolutionary, mobilizing, liberating, only if it is based on the class perspective of the toilers and is guided by Marxist-Leninist theory.

It would be a tragedy if the Palestinian movement were to shake off the PLO leadership only to come under Islamic control, a result that would certainly lead to more decades of misery for the masses. Jason's approach neither helps the masses to shake off the PLO sellouts nor to pose a real alternative to Hamas. <>

Jason Defends His Position on Palestine

HE'S BA-A-A-C-C-K! And just when you thought it was safe to engage in empty sloganeering! Whoops, there I go again, mocking and slandering people again. Sorry, I just can't resist! Besides, my fearful masters, Ben and Fred told me to, and I always do everything they say. I live to serve them. Yeah. Right. Seriously, This next missive will be split into three sections. The first will be a very small reply to Detroit's latest barrage. It will be very small simply because a) I don't think much new stuff was raised and b) I am not interested, and I suspect neither are others in cyberspace, in trying to debate the fundamentalists from their own terrain. Rather I want to discuss the issues which can actually result in some fruitful debate among those of us who are not stuck looking for sinners to send to Hell. The second section will be a re-statement of some of my basic views, both to correct distortions from the fundamentalists and to bring others up to speed. This will also be short. The third and most complex section will deal with the main topic: exploring ideology, strategy and tactics for the Palestinian resistance. This will be the majority of the paper.

One quick note: I have opened an account through the university I attend, and this

will also be accessible through Compuserve. My address is as follows:

Jasonred@elwha.evergreen.edu

SECTION ONE: Okay, now to respond to some of what Detroit raises. 1. On the question of trends, I have been branded as part of the "heresy" of Ben and Fred. This of course, is something that will remain a part of their creed regardless of what I say, so I'm not going to bother too much with it. It should be noted however, that the innocent characterization of Mark as someone attempting to "clarify" trends and "clarify" my relation to them is nonsense. Like all fundamentalists, (Pete and L.A. included), Mark is engaged in a witchhunt, looking for people he views as having abandoned his brand of by-the-book Marxism so he can write polemics against them. He is not attempting to clarify anything, he is engaged in an unprincipled campaign of slander and character assassination, using straw-man tactics, deception, and misrepresentation, spiked with liberal doses of hyperbole and moralism. This tactic continues with Pete, who in an attempt to muddy my description of differences between Ben and Fred, decides that they are too in an alliance because - "they don't want anything to do with

Marxism"! Even people who have strong disagreements with some of their stands (and I count myself among them) don't engage in this type of libelous description. That's because we would rather have a real debate, not a phony name-calling session. And that, ironically enough, is what substitutes for political work amongst our holy rollers, the long-winded polemics of Joseph on Imperialism notwithstanding. The simple truth is that if people like Ben, Fred and myself did not exist, the fundamentalists would have to invent us.

To be accused by such elements of using "insults" is humorous. But one clarification here: my use of the term "fundamentalist" is not an attempt at insult. I use the term because of my dissatisfaction with other terms developed so far, such as Biospherians or icon people. I wanted a label which would actually correctly and incisively sum up their approach to Marxism. In case anyone missed it, I repeat my earlier characterization:

"...Mark examines political views on the basis of whether they show loyalty to a particular ideology. This ideology is a particularly reductionist and literal interpretation of the words of Marx and Lenin. It is not for nothing that I call people like Mark fundamental-

ists. On this basis, he and his brethren read others views, and decide whether they accurately reflect the "truth" of his brand of Marxism-Leninism. If they do, they are valuable and correct; if they do not, then the person is under "alien" influences, and "false" ideologies."

I stand by this statement, and await any attempt by them to refute it. Mark, in his latest missive, has tried pin on me a straw-man dichotomy between Marxist theory and my desire to have an analysis that accurately reflects reality. This is foolishness; my objections to the fundamentalists is not that they are "too" Marxist. My characterization of them is based on their narrow (and moralist) interpretation of what Marxism is. This interpretation, rather than being too "close" a reading of Marx, actually misses the essence of the way Marx used dialectical and historical materialism to analyze the world. If this characterization irritates them, I can only refer them to the joke whose punchline starts "if the fool shits...."

2. On the question of Mark's "analysis": Both Pete and Mark try and create the impression that Mark is advancing "ideas on building a revolutionary movement." I don't think so, and am opposed to empty phrasemongering. How do we decide? Let's just look at the relevant quotes that

Mark offers, and decide for ourselves. a. Pg. 8, *CWV*, "Hence, anyone interested in advancing the Palestinian movement must face the task of building up the revolutionary class organization of the toilers." b. *ibid*, "The class organization of the working people independent of the PLO and Hamas is needed to push forward the battle for complete political rights, including the goal of a democratic secular state that embraces both Israel and the occupied territories. It is also needed so that the masses see their democratic and national struggles as only part of the movement toward their class liberation under socialism. And without class organization, even the immediate economic demands of the workers will remain a dead letter. c. *ibid*, "The class outlook also combats the narrow, nationalist influence in the Palestinian movement....it pushes the movement to seek to build links to Jewish workers and encourage them to break with the Zionist influence." d. Pg.9, *CWV*, "But embarking upon the path of class organization is the only way the Palestinian cause will move ahead."

So here we construct the basic model:

1. The Palestinians unite under a M-L party to wage struggle - all other methods are doomed to impotence.

2. This wonderful class organization unites the Pales-

tinian toilers with the Jewish workers.

3. Zionism is overthrown, and one state is created to cover all the area currently made up of territories and Israel proper. (Mark, in his latest missive, is forced to admit that "the present phase of the struggle, the 'Intifada', will not directly lead to the toppling of Israeli rule." Thank you, Mark, my point exactly.)

This of course is the MLP's traditional line - half made up of blood-curdling threats to destroy Israel, and half made up of Leninist orthodoxy as only our fundamentalists can concoct. But there are two little problems with the model of our former comrades. One is that absolutely no strategy, let alone advice, is advanced as to how to succeed in creating this scenario, or even it's initial steps. This is not surprising, given that the second problem is that the chances of this scenario coming to pass are somewhere between zero and nil. That being the case, it would look a little ludicrous to advance a plan based on achieving it. "First, you publish a monthly newspaper, filled with quotes from Lenin. Make sure there's a big hammer and sickle on the front page! Then you just expose all the other Palestinian parties and organizations as being pawns of the Bourgeoisie! Then when every-

body realizes how right you are, they all support us and we get to have the revolution! Yeah, that's the ticket!"

My view is that when someone introduces a schematic that has little connection to the on-going situation on the ground, he is engaging in phrasemongering. When this schematic is not a creation of an actual analysis, but merely a representation of the subjective views of a few ossified paper revolutionaries, I call it phrasemongering. When it is offered with not one shred of strategic, or tactical, or even practical advice as to how it could be implemented given current, (or future), realities, I call it phrasemongering. Others may call it whatever they want.

Yet there is a deeper problem with this sort of logic as well: it is class-reductionist. There are several forms of exploitation and domination currently existing in Palestinian society. There is national oppression of the Palestinians as a people. There is class oppression of Palestinians as workers, both by Israeli and Palestinian capital. There is oppression based on the particular gender/patriarchal form which is a part of any third world country. And there is the cultural oppression of radical Islamic fundamentalism.

Nor are these forms of oppression separate and dis-

tinct, but operate simultaneously and in a totally intertwined manner. I will try and advance some concrete methods for dealing with them in section three, but the point I want to make here is how not to deal with them. And that is by reducing them all down to a question of class. For instance, Mark characterizes the Islamic fundamentalists thusly: " Hamas represents the Islamic fundamentalist section of the bourgeoisie and would like, for now at least, a share of the power and privileges the PLO has." This is an attempt to reduce Hamas' motivations down to that of a venal, corrupt bourgeoisie strata. And it is nonsense. Hamas has many serious, fatal flaws, most of them ideological. But in fact they are known for not being corrupt, and not having an entire section of flunkies and sycophants riding around in Mercedes, like Fatah has. It is also known for erecting a densely structured network of social service organizations which have done much more in the way of concrete support for Palestinians facing hardship from the Intifada than other PLO-connected outfits.

It is precisely this which has endeared them to a section of the Palestinian masses, particularly in Gaza. (That of course is not the only reason; the attraction of a social ideology which appears both fiercely opposed to Zionism and bound up with the spiritual

traditions of its people has a powerful appeal as well.) This is not to say that Hamas and Islamic Holy War do not have bourgeois elements in them - but it is not the way to examine the threat they pose to genuine Palestinian interests.

Any Palestinian organization which is able to work its way through the tangled knot of struggles on the ground must be able to create an analysis which ties together class, national, patriarchal, and cultural domination and economic exploitation. Neither reducing all struggles down to a question of class, or using the old base/superstructure model of the Third International (class issues primary, everything else secondary) will provide a way forward.

3. The way this lack of analysis is supported is to try and paint me as being for the ending of the Intifada, which is nonsense. I am supposedly advising the Palestinians to sit on their hands, "wait passively for things to change", and promoting that the Zionist state is "about to disappear and be replaced with a non-Zionist Israel." I have advanced none of these propositions, and in fact alluded to the importance of the Intifada as the motor driving the Palestinian struggle. Mark is forced to admit this too, in his latest letter, though he tries to denigrate it by saying it is "to subordinate

the struggle of the masses to the creation of the mini-state."

SECTION TWO: I will now take the time, for those of you lost under the blizzard of accusations, red herrings, straw men, moralism, and phrasemongering, to repeat and re-emphasize my basic views. I will do this by means of a few brief propositions.

1. The region of the Middle East currently occupied by Israel proper is going to stay Israel proper. Although this state is in a severe, long-range economic crisis, and will have problems maintaining its political/ideological hegemony among its own people, it is not likely to collapse, or be overthrown in the foreseeable future.

2. The West Bank and Gaza, currently occupied by Israel, must and will be liberated from their control. The goal of this struggle is the creation of a nation-state, under the control of a democratically elected national authority. The successful waging of this phase of the struggle will create for the Palestinian toilers the optimum conditions to take up other issues of domination and exploitation, including issues of class, gender, and further political rights

3. The main tool of this liberation is the Intifada. The mass struggle will go on, as it

is not under the control of the PLO, or Hamas. That is not likely to change, nor should it.

It is generated, first and foremost, by the continued military occupation of territory which will eventually become Palestinian. Up until now, I did not directly address the specific possible strategies for the Intifada, which my opponents used to try and suggest that I had no desire to see the Intifada continue. This is a lie, and I will, in section 3, spell out my views on this issue.

4. The various Accords and other agreements between Israel and the PLO are a fact, regardless of how flawed they are. They are not going to be abrogated, and there is no point in spending time complaining that they are stacked in Israel's favor. Of course much stronger position internationally and domestically than the PLO, even with the Intifada going on. It is important to point out though that the Agreements, while not going away, are also not set in stone. The ongoing Intifada has everything to do with how these pacts are added to, carried out, or amended.

5. The current economic crisis in Israel, alongside and intertwined with the Intifada, is creating the conditions for Israel to make certain concessions to the Palestinians. Eventually, these concessions will include the recognition by

Israel of an independent Palestinian state.

6. As Palestine is born, it is facing a severe economic crisis of its own. The source of this crisis is the de-development policies fostered by the Israelis over the last forty years. Key issues include lack of water, lack of industry, infrastructure, shrinking agriculture, high unemployment, poor health care, insufficient education, and general conditions of third world-type poverty. Behind all of these issues lurks an overall and immediate problem: an acute shortage of capital. This capital is needed both to jump-start an extremely depressed region and to allow for the erection of some kind of working economy capable of employing a fast-growing Palestinian population.

7. They are biased; Israel has a despite such a bleak picture, certain favorable conditions exist. One is that international aid, as it was originally planned, was both relatively generous, and without many of the usual strings of austerity these institutions normally include as conditions on aid. The amounts that were announced were actually about as much as the territories were capable of absorbing. Another is that Israel itself is interested in investing in the West Bank. Although such investment would obviously be advanced for the purposes of allowing

the Israeli bourgeoisie to advance their interests in the context of the new, global economy, the possibility exists of it assisting the reconstruction of the territories as well. Short-term effects, such as increased employment inside the territories, are a distinct possibility. The long-term building of a Palestinian industrial/agricultural base is also likely. Given the current situation of utter deprivation, this would be advantageous for the Palestinians as a whole, not just for their ruling classes.

8. The best future for a Palestinian state is not one where an economic "iron curtain" would exist between Israel and Palestine. Not all Israeli settlements should be uprooted, not all trade, investment, and employment between the two territorial entities should be viewed through the narrow prism of neo-colonialism. For instance, trade and investment between economically viable Israeli settlements and Palestinian villages in the West Bank is of possible benefit for both sides.

SECTION ONE:

1. Although the first issue I would like to cover is the prospects for Palestinian struggle, it is necessary to first describe briefly some recent events and what they reveal about the various players.

Several weeks ago a massacre of Palestinians took place in Gaza by Palestinian National Authority Police. It is possible that this is the prelude to a Palestinian civil war, though I hope not. The massacre itself is to be condemned, with no amount of equivocating over supposed "provocations" on the part of Hamas. Notwithstanding any ulterior motives by the fundamentalists, to first prohibit, and then open fire on a demonstration, held with or without permission, is inexcusable

But beyond the issue of moral condemnation, the reaction of the Palestinian authorities shows that they are desperate. The question is: why? There are several factors to examine here.

The first is that the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) not only does not represent the Palestinians as a whole, it doesn't even represent Palestinian ruling circles. The PNA represents a very narrow band of die-hard Arafat supporters, based in a section of Fatah. They were largely appointed on the basis of loyalty to Arafat. Many individuals of this section are not based in the territories, and most of those that are not in Gaza. One sign of this narrowness is that when Arafat recently tried to convene the 18-member PNC (the executive body of the PLO), only 8 members even agreed to show

up, let alone endorse anything Arafat proposed. In fact, there is significant activity amongst the Palestinian exile community to oppose Arafat's authority and many have called upon him to step down. Some of these, like Edward Said, are opponents of the Peace Accords, and base part of their opposition on that. Others, like Hanna Ashawri, are more ambiguous about the accords, but oppose Arafat on the grounds that he is autocratic, and that the PNA is fundamentally undemocratic in its structure and practice.

What has made the situation even worse is that these cronies of Arafat have been appointed piecemeal and tardily, on the basis of the day-to-day course of Arafat's backroom politics. Added to this is the ineptness, corruption, and lack of familiarity with concrete conditions that many of these appointees possess. Of course, this does not represent the entire composition of the PNA. There are lower level officials, mostly connected with the committees involved in setting up nascent state institutions, who are honestly trying to grapple with the enormous objective problems such an undertaking faces. But these officials are under the Arafat loyalists, making their work that much harder.

Added to this are problems which any nascent state apparatus would have in a

similar situation: Israel is exerting extreme political and economic pressure on the PNA. The political pressure boils down to demanding that Arafat integrate his security forces with that of the Israelis for the purposes of fighting Hamas/IHW and that he insure demonstrations against settlements like Netzarim do not get out of hand. And Arafat is not in much of a position to do this. Any cooperation with Zionist security forces is rightly seen as collaborative. And the Intifada is not Arafat's to subdue, a point that appears lost on the Israelis. Indeed, as we have seen from recent events, any attempt to suppress protests merely backfires on the suppressors.

The economic pressure is in the form of pressuring donor countries to deal with Israeli bureaucracy before dispensing aid to the PNA and in dragging out economic negotiations with the Palestinians. This is tantamount to a slow strangulation of the PNA. As if this weren't enough, the clampdown on the flow of Palestinian laborers has added to an already explosive issue of unemployment, especially in Gaza.

Apparently the PNA is going to have to be brought to the brink of collapse before Israel realizes that it is shooting itself in the foot. It cannot take back the authority already ceded to the PNA.

And it cannot allow the situation to continue without an increase in attacks on Israel. How long before they understand this is anyone's guess.

Added to all this is the attitude of international donors, who are apparently expecting the PNA to be functioning as smoothly as any long-standing government. A marked case of cold feet combined with bureaucratic regulations has slowed aid down to a trickle of the originally promised amount.

2. What makes the Palestinian issue so complex is that it is not one struggle, but many, all interrelated, and all absolutely essential to wage simultaneously. What are these struggles? A partial list of the most important includes:

1. The Palestinians vs. the Israeli occupation
2. The Palestinians vs. the Palestinian National Authority, as it is presently constructed.
3. The Palestinian toilers vs. the Palestinian bourgeoisie.
4. The secular Palestinians vs. the Islamic fundamentalist Palestinians.
5. There are other struggles as well on the "back burner", so to speak. The Palestinians vs. international donors, e.g. the IMF, and the Palestinians vs. Arab capital are two that come to mind.

If you look at the way in which I criticized class-reduc-

tionism in section two, you can see a parallel construction in the oppression I named there and the struggles I named here. What this means is that although it is necessary to talk about the individual struggles separately, nonetheless any strategy must be able to incorporate the different currents of struggle under an overall framework. My view is that that framework is the drive for Palestinian statehood. Why is this? Because it is my view that the drive for statehood will serve as a hegemonic device to unite the largest amount and the most active section of Palestinians at the base against the most severe roadblocks in the several, overlapping struggles.

That said, a general slogan for statehood is not enough. What possible concrete demands can be raised, given the current level of struggle? A. The democratization of the PNA: Arafat and his cronies have proved themselves inept at economic management, and possessed of all the political instincts of the Czar. From a tactical angle, it is difficult to simply demand their ouster, as this will not be accomplished short of a violent civil war. Given the high likelihood of an Islamic state run by Hamas to be the victor, this is not necessarily a thing to wish for. It is however possible to advance the slogan that other forces, of which there are many of a secular nature, be

appointed to the government. Some of these will be better accountable to the masses than others, but regardless of the particularities of the groups, a government of wider dimensions will further the goal of accountability to the masses. It will also allow the Intifada to increase its ability to press for the PNA to take specific stands vs. other actors, such as the Israelis. B. The democratization of the PNA: No, I'm not repeating myself. The other issue is elections. At this point, it provides the easiest method for ousting Arafat supporters. It also allows an important exercise in sovereignty which the Palestinians need. And it is one of the processes that genuine nation-states engage in, which is the direction of the current struggle. But most important, local elections insure accountability on day-to-day issues that no other process at this time will. And it is one way to provide a litmus test for the Islamic fundamentalists on their social program. It is possible that the Palestinians will accept a variation of the Sharia, but I doubt it. That sort of climate flourishes best amongst a poorly educated people with no democratic traditions and little political sophistication. The Palestinians have the highest degree of education in the Middle East, and the most exposure to different political trends. They have been fighting for elementary democratic rights

for forty years - I doubt they are about to freely hand them over to religious fanatics given a democratic choice where they are only one of several options.

C. The reinvigoration of neighborhood committees and other civil structures: During the early phase of the Intifada, the day-to-day struggle against the Israelis were handled by ad-hoc coalitions of people from different political trends. Although this worked best in the West Bank with its series of isolated (by the Israelis) villages, there was a good deal of cooperation between factions in Gaza as well. But as the Intifada wore on, factional strife grew worse. Orders on strategy and tactics began to originate from outside the local arenas of struggle. Leaders of the local organizations began to be recruited and controlled by different factions. The result of this is an overall weakening of the Intifada. And it set up conditions for Arafat's cronies to more easily push aside local activists in erecting the structures of the PNA.

The returning of control to activists at the base is something that could be raised as a demand in all mass organizations. It would strengthen the Intifada. It would discourage corruption. It would encourage participatory democracy, vs. the type of weak representative democracy that is the hallmark of the bourgeois

state. Obviously, it would be difficult to delineate exactly how this strategy would be implemented. But it is well in tune with the sentiments of the masses, and with the traditions of the Intifada. D. A basic "Bill of Rights" for Palestinian civilians: This is not to suggest that American-style constitutional reforms are the be-all and end-all of Palestinian democracy. It is, however, a fact, that any civil rights Palestinians now have are the whim of the PNA and the security forces. The shootings in Gaza, as well as the closing of newspapers, and arbitrary arrests, are ramifications of that situation. For years the Palestinians were under the heel, (and whim) of the IDF. Now that they have a national authority of some type, they have the right to demand of it minimal safeguards against unlawful arrest and detention, curtailing of basic individual and press freedoms, etc. E. The directing of the Intifada against military settlements through mass actions: Blowing up people in public markets is terrorism, period. Blowing up buses is terrorism, period. It should not be encouraged, it should be condemned. Just because the Israelis also condemn it doesn't mean that it is progressive to support it or remain silent. It is also piss-poor strategy for the Intifada. The strength of the struggle has always been the mass actions. When hundreds of Palestinians swarmed

the outer guardposts at Netzarim during the protests in Gaza, the Israeli soldiers fled into the settlement. There's a lesson there.

It is also precisely settlements like Netzarim that the Israelis have to be forced to give up. They serve absolutely no economic purpose, and are not a bunch of innocent farmers. Rabin has publicly admitted his disdain for them. They are "security" settlements made up of right-wing religio-fascist extremists. They have no place in Palestine, and they should be opposed until they are removed, whether in Gaza or Hebron. They are a small minority of the settlers overall, but they engage in the majority of terrorism against Palestinians, usually innocent bystanders. Zionism has created a monster - they must be forced to deal with them, and fought against until their removal by the IDF.

F. Three demands on the economic front: The lifting of restrictions on labor, the immediate dispensing of funds from international donors, the immediate creation of a public works program to provide employment through the building of housing and infrastructure: These three demands are directed against the Israeli actions most damaging to the creation of any type of Palestinian economy. a. The repeated on again/off again closure of Gaza and/or the West Bank

makes it impossible for Palestinians working in Israel to get to their jobs. This creates especially severe problems in Gaza, where at one time over 30% of the work force was employed in Israel. The irony is that Israel created this situation to begin with, by choking off development in the Territories so as to provide both a captive market for Israeli goods and a cheap labor force. Now they are reaping the result of that, in the form of individual terrorism. Too bad. Until such time as a functioning economy is built in the Territories to absorb the Israeli-created unemployment, they are a de facto part of the Israeli labor force. Besides, the attempts to close off the Territories have not been successful one iota in providing safety for Israeli ordinary citizens.

b. A public works program is something all parties to the conflict promised would be immediately forthcoming. Everyone from Peres to Rabin to the IMF was supposed to make this a first priority. Sewers, schools, clinics, water pipes, power lines; the basics are all desperately needed. It hasn't happened, and everybody's pointing fingers at everyone else as to who's to blame. The truth is everyone's to blame, and an immediate goal of any mass struggle should be to light a fire under these idiot's feet.

c. Housing shortages have not been seen on this scale since South Africa. The Israeli rules and regs against construction has led to person per room density almost unparalleled. Waiting for private construction to fill the gap is absurd - let housing be the other immediate public works program off the ground. Besides, the Palestinian construction workers have been decimated by repeated closures, they are one of the primary breadwinners in Gaza, so two birds could be killed with one stone.

There are other important issues as well. One is water rights, which is likely to be the most contentious issue in the long run. Israeli water usage is evolved into a severely wasteful pattern. If this goes unchanged, there simply is not enough water for everyone in the area: Palestinians, Jordanians, Israelis. As a measure of how difficult this issue is to resolve, even the lovefest currently going on between Jordan and Israel is marred by the inability of negotiators to hammer any out agreement on this.

Another is the issue of repatriation. The fact is, if every exiled Palestinian were repatriated tomorrow, they would starve in a month - there is simply no place for that many people. Nonetheless, as the Palestinian state establishes itself, they and the

Israelis have a moral obligation to repatriate some of these individuals.

3. Any of these demands have the capability of being the core program for new mass organizations. Many of them could even be taken up by mass/cadre organizations currently in existence in the Territories. I don't propose to pontificate on what form Palestinian organizations should take. But I do believe that these are the essential issues that need to be immediately addressed.

That said, a central reality must be acknowledged. The likelihood of a Marxist-Leninist cadre-type organization arising to lead this struggle is simply non-existent. There exists no social/ideological base for such an organization, for two reasons. One is that the theory itself is in crisis, as the dissolution of the MLP is only one sign of. The other is that for such a development to take place, there would have to be a group or trend of radical intellectuals headed in that direction. In case anyone has completely forgotten our own history, it was such a trend in the U.S. student left in the 60's that led to the creation of the MLP. No such trend currently exists in the Territories.

There are three possible attitudes to have towards this. One centers around denial. This approach simply ignores

whether or not the conditions exist, simply "rhetoricizes" them away in a blizzard of empty phrasemongering. I'll give everyone two guesses as to which group of people I am referring to here. The second centers around despair. It acknowledges that the possibilities for a M-L party are slim to none, but rather than that acting as a spur to extrapolate other ways forward, one becomes depressed. It is assumed that without this type of organization, little or no progress can be made. It sees the only possible changes taking place as cosmetic, thoroughly reformist, etc. This type of thinking stems from the inability to actually learn from one's own history, and the history of the collapse of the anti-revisionist left. The third reaction is to understand that, in spite of difficult subjective conditions, in spite of ideological unclarity, the social struggle (class, fraction, nation, gender) marches on. The third seeks to take a look at the present development, and try and determine what is actually possible in this period. It sets no a priori limits on how transformational the results of struggle are. This is the approach I am trying to maintain. In the preceding section, I am attempting to take a look at concrete conditions that exist in the Middle East, and construct a possible agenda for Palestinians. This is speculation to some extent, and even hubris. But I be-

lieve that I am not advancing anything that is unrealizable at some point in the near future.

Of course, one issue that I have not dealt with quite yet is the specifically ideological. Palestinians have historically attempted, and are still attempting, to fight for their national identity with three weapons: Nationalism (PLO), Islamic fundamentalism (Hamas) and a collection of social-democratic/revisionist "Marxist" concepts arising from the legacy of the sixties (PFLP, DFLP, PCP). This eclectic brew is made up of Castroism, Maoism, Anarchism, etc.

None of these three trends has provided a long-term basis for establishing Palestine in the long term, though each has been successful in the short run at various times and locations. All of them have contributed to leading the struggle to take wrong turns at crucial points. There exists a genuine issue of exploring the historical weaknesses of each trend. And there exists a genuine issue of suggesting a theoretical framework to guide the current struggle. This is not for the purposes of setting up an overall paradigm for all time; that has been done enough. Rather it is to try and describe what concepts would guide the Palestinians most

[continued on page 5]

How Mark Equates "Cooperative Anarchy" with "Anarchy of Production"

Ben, Seattle

-78- Folks, this is a major issue of first rate theoretical importance. I hope readers pay careful attention to how Mark's allegiance to Stalin's codified theory of social and economic organization and his sectarian induced artificial stupidity degrades his ability to deal with what is certainly one of the most important questions of our time.

Below are Mark's comments on the matter (emphasis added): "... for [Ben], everything would be just dandy if organizations were less **'top down'** and more **'bottom up'**. That is, of course unless 'bottom up' doesn't work, then, he says, you should be 'top down.' I must admit, Ben's organizational theories have gone bottoms up! ...

"Further insight into Ben's organizational genius can be culled from his analysis that the dictatorship of the proletariat should be based on **"cooperative anarchy in which the actions of many independent, conflicting and parallel processes will somehow be coordinated to create fantastic amounts of material and social wealth without the necessity for any clumsy, burdensome and inefficient bureaucracy.'**

"Let's see, a society of **independent producers** who, despite **conflicting** with one

another, **'somehow'** produce a heaven on earth. Ben's **'cooperative anarchy'** is **just another way of describing capitalism**, another way of praising the **'invisible hand'** which **unites the independent, conflicting entities**. **Socialism must overcome anarchy of production, it must overcome independent processes that are somehow coordinated**. Ben is right to be upset about the bureaucracy that developed in the former Soviet Union. But opposing bureaucracy without opposing **anarchy of production** is fitting for the Chamber of Commerce, not a socialist. And no matter what Ben imagines, his anarchy will, like in all other capitalist societies, give rise to a repressive bureaucracy -- no matter how many computers exist in that society!"

-84- Mark makes a number of assumptions here that reflect both sectarian fury and typical revisionist prejudice. Let's consider what they are:

Assumption # 1 -- "only capitalism can organize competition"

-85- Mark equates the **coordinating force** that would bring into alignment "the actions of many independent, conflicting and parallel processes" with the **"invisible hand"** which coordinates inde-

pendent commodity producers under capitalism. Of course this "invisible hand" is also known as the action of the capitalist market. So Mark is **simply assuming that no other kind of force is possible** that can coordinate the actions of producers who have any significant degree of independence from one another. Hence, according to Mark, **only capitalist principles** can structure an economy in which **the creators of wealth may organize into units that compete against each other and enjoy significant freedom of action in their economic decisions**. We might expect revisionists to think like this, but why should communists ?

Assumption # 2 -- "what the hell's the difference anyway ?"

-86- Mark simply equates **"cooperative anarchy"**, a term the meaning of which he likely does not have a clue, with **"anarchy of production"** under capitalism. Of course both terms do contain the word "anarchy". But to equate these two terms on account of sharing a word would be similar to equating "socialism" with "national socialism" because both terms have a word in common. Sectarian supporters would do well to consider the consequences of continuing to allow our Marks

and Josephs to be the arbiters of the limits of our debate.

Let's discuss these **amazing assumptions** just a bit.

-88- Why should we accept Mark's assumption that **only capitalism can organize economic competition**? Such an assumption is **absurd**. Competition performs an important function. It can **prove**, so to speak, **who's hot and who's not**. Competition can prove which techniques and methods of production and motivation are **effective** in the **real world**. Competition can be considered a form of **scientific experiment**. "You say your way is better? Well, we'll just organize a little contest and **find out**". This is true in the fields of economics, politics, culture, etc. Just to give one example: Mark and I are competing right now. We are producers of ideas who are competing to show the relevance of opposing theories to building an organization that serves the working class. Are Mark and I therefore capitalists?

EVERYTHING Complex is Made Up of Independent, Conflicting Processes

-89- The **magnitude** of Mark's error is difficult to overstate. By denouncing the idea of an economy composed of vast numbers of conflicting, independent processes, Mark has accomplished the **impossible**. Mark has presented to us a picture of a future communist

economy and world **without internal contradictions**. Such a world would be utterly devoid of life and completely dead, not to mention impossible. This is what we get from our would-be resident expert on dialectical materialism. And then **he can't figure out** why we don't give him tenure, **why many comrades refuse to read his spam**.

-90- Mark, in effect, is accusing me of worshipping capitalism. There is much to say here and time is short. This is such a rich area that maybe comrades will forgive me for getting a little carried away in what follows. Some of my formulations could doubtlessly be improved. Mark, the "stop me before I spam again" **titan of tough talk** will doubtlessly pull some phrase out of context. Too bad.

-91- To broaden our view a bit, let's consider the phenomenon of **life**. All life processes are based on the extremely complex interactions of large and small macromolecules which simultaneously both attract and repel one another. All life processes are products of a system of organization made of **billions and billions** of contradictory, conflicting, independent and parallel processes. And yet there exist principles of organization that nature has stumbled upon which allow these independent, contradictory, parallel processes to interact in such a way that the sum effect is highly **syner-**

gistic (i.e.: the whole is more than the sum of its parts) and creates a system with a higher order of complexity.

-92- Similarly all profound intellectual or emotional processes involve the interplay and interaction of independent, conflicting elements.

-93- No process of any complexity could possibly be otherwise. Nature, by its nature, is **PARALLEL**.

-94- Yet Mark, smugly and in a **most authoritative manner** whips around a strand of cooked spaghetti, imagines he is cracking a bullwhip, and lays down the law: any complex economy composed of independent, conflicting, wealth-creating processes is **by definition capitalism**. I would say that if someone should be accused of worshipping capitalism -- it should not be Ben, but Mark.

-95- Competition is inseparable from and an indispensable component of cooperation. Competition is, in the final analysis, the only available means to **measure** the efficiency or effectiveness of a process. All measurement involves a process of **comparison** of a known quantity to an unknown quantity. Competition is the **most real method** of comparing and contrasting, **in practice**, one process with another.

96- **Competition is here to stay**. Competition in all

spheres of society (whether economic, cultural, political, etc.) is fundamentally a reflection of the inherent tendency of all processes in nature to operate in **parallel**. As such, as a **manifestation of parallelity**, competition (as a way of resolving contradictions, which must, of necessity, interact with one another) is inherent in the **character of physical law**. Those who profess that competition, as a principle of economic development, is only possible via the mechanism of **money** and the **market** are in fact **preaching that money and the market are eternal** -- that from now until the end of time "**MON-NEY MAKES THE WORLD GO 'ROUND'**". Such preaching is not that far off from (and from a theoretical point of view is **much worse** than) the views of Fred and Jason. Fred and Jason are at least in a formal sense **agnostic** (i.e.: unconvinced) on this question while **Mark, who disdains agnosticism on any scientific subject, is absolutely certain that competition is forever bound up with the existence of money, the market, commodity production and the rule of capital.**

-97- **And who opposes competition ?** Those who have a material interest in preventing the contradictions from working themselves out (i.e.: resolving themselves) -- those who, in the face of competition, know that they will **lose**. Mark understands that in the open competition of

ideas that he will **lose**. This is why he tries to **cheat** with a hail of **spintrons, shit-ons, morons** and other particles of the Self-referential Tautological Uncritical Principle of Interactive Dogmatism (i.e.: S.T.U.P.I.D.). Mark's insight on the need to drown intelligent discussion in stupidity shows the **"hidden intelligence"** behind our sectarian's artificial stupidity systems.

Capitalist Competition

-98- What might assist production units in a communist economy to coordinate their activity into a harmonious whole ? The direction of Mark's thinking is shown by his raising of the issue of **"anarchy of production"**. Can we summarize the meaning of this term in a few words ? Yes we can. Under capitalism, various economic units (ie: corporations) produce **commodities** for sale on the **market**. Production volumes are based on estimates of sales volumes that the **market** will support. Prices are set via "supply and demand" curves and the imperative to maximize profit. Because of the complex interworkings of such a system, **periodic crises** develop in which many or most companies simultaneously experience a phenomena under which production volumes exceed what can be sold for a profit and **inventories accumulate**. This periodic crisis is called a recession or depression. The **lack of an overall plan** governing or regulating

production is often cited as an essential element of this periodic crisis. It should also be noted in passing that the periodic economic crises which accompany capitalist economic development, painful though they are, are only an **extremely small** and visible part of the **extreme wastage** of human, material and ecosystem resources under capitalism.

-99- Revisionist economies have attempted to coordinate the actions of production units by **stripping them of most of their freedom of action**, often dictating to them incredibly detailed production plans, schedules, quotas, sources of supply and details of distribution. Under such arrangements, the production units are often unable to make decisions based on **local conditions** or to **defy** the detailed directives of central planning bodies which may or may not be composed of people with their head up their ass. In all the revisionist economies the central planning bodies have all inevitably developed into bureaucracies that made decisions that went against the interests of the workers and the majority of society. Furthermore, economic development in the revisionist countries either **stagnated** or became so slow that competition with "free-market" capitalism in the economic-political-military spheres led to their being either crushed or forced to accede to marketplace mechanisms.

Capitalist Competition

-100- One of the most essential and defining characteristics of a truly communist economy would be the active participation of the masses in setting priorities for the overall direction for economic development and growth. Would the action of the masses be reflected simply through **central planning bodies** which would dictate a tune to which all production units must march? Well this is conceivable in particular industries and in **particular circumstances** but in general I believe it absurd to consider this the **general rule** covering the bulk of the production of the wealth of society.

-101- There are other ways of involving the masses in the economic life of society. The masses can participate as **consumers**, as **producers** (i.e.: as workers) and as **shapers of public opinion**. This could include participation in **mass organizations** that would be **very effective** despite wielding **no formal authority** whatsoever.

-102- Consider an example. Two similar products are available. One tends to use resources that **endanger an ecosystem** and the other **requires more labor**. Or, similarly, the production of one or the other may indirectly affect the **living conditions of people in Bangladesh**. Or again, one may be produced by an eco-

nomic unit which is seized by an **internal dispute** and the masses may wish to **take sides**. The decisions of the masses, as consumers (as individuals or via organizations that choose products), as workers (as individuals or via organizations similar to unions) and as shapers of public opinion (again, as individuals or via participation in economic, political or cultural organizations) would determine the proportion of the two competing products which accumulate to the public wealth. Does this mean that there would be no central planning bodies? No. But it allows us to see a picture of a society and an economy vastly more complex and sophisticated than the one-dimensional cartoon picture Mark has drawn up in which the **general rule is that production units can be neither in conflict with nor independent of one another**.

-103- For example, there might be **different and opposing bodies** concerned with economic planning and development. Or there might be different schools of thought or currents of opinion within a single planning body. These differences would correspond to **opposing or competing political, economic or cultural philosophies**. Another factor here may be competing **material interests**. Competing material interests may play a small role for a while in the early stages of communist (i.e.: classless) society, even if their effect is infinitely small-

er than the role they play in a class divided society.

-104- What is required to accomplish the coordination of production units which may both compete and cooperate with one another in ways more complex than the vibration and interaction of molecules in a living cell? The action of the marketplace under capitalism is **infinitely crude** compared to the kinds of coordination that would exist in a communist economy. A communist economy would operate without a **market**. It would operate without **money**. There would be no production of **commodities** (i.e.: goods produced for the purpose of sale). ALL production would be for the sake of **consumption** and ALL consumption would be for the sake of **production**. The economic, political and cultural struggles in society would be utterly and completely **merged and indistinguishable** from one another although by this time we are probably discussing something advanced beyond the very earliest stages of communist society that we can foresee.

-105- For such an economy a high degree of political, cultural and economic development would be necessary. The mechanism that coordinates the action of all producers and all consumers would not be the **marketplace** but **consciousness**. The intervention of consciousness in the economic life of society would

occur in **myriad ways** at every level. Consciousness would in turn be served by the material and cultural/informational goods and services (i.e.: "hardware" and "software") produced. And consciousness would also be the primary, the highest and the **ultimate form of wealth**.

Competition Under the Dictatorship of the Proletariat

-106- I have tried to explore some of these questions at greater length in my "On the Transition to a Communist Economy". In particular, in "TCE" I focus on the question of how we get "from here to there". Mark says I will not release it because I believe "the rest of the world is too stupid". But my stand is actually against **passivity**. I oppose the passivity of **both** the minority and the majority, both of which have, with certain exceptions, failed to take an **active interventionist attitude** against overcoming the **stinky sectarian atmosphere** in our midst that has been created by Joseph and his loyal lap dog Mark. The reality is that I have repeatedly offered to release both "TCE" and "DIPR" (i.e.: "The Digital Infrastructure of the Proletarian Revolution") as soon as I get **two** responses to my poll from **each city** with x-mlp activists. I take this stand because I believe that it encourages an **interactive atmosphere** in which the reading audience **participates in the creation of theory**. I take this stand not

because I believe comrades are stupid but because they are **passive against stupidity**. I don't write for couch potatoes or armchair revolutionaries. And when convinced I am right, I am **more stubborn** than a mule.

-107- Of course I have been discussing the functioning of a communist economy. We know that under communism there would be no state and hence no possibility for central planning bodies to throw their weight around in a coercive manner. But Mark's opposition to me centers around the transition period between capitalism and communism, the period of the "dictatorship of the proletariat". Would competition exist under the "D of P"? Yes. **It would flourish**. Otherwise we could never get "from here to there".

-108- I consider it is a mistake to believe that there would be a single form of economy during this transition period. I have concluded that instead of inventing forms corresponding to a homogeneous "socialist economy" -- that we should consider a different approach. I conclude that during the transition period both capitalist and communist sectors of the economy would exist side by side. In fact, I expect there would be **three sectors** because the capitalist sector would itself be divided into a private capitalist sector and a state capitalist sector. All sectors would **compete against one**

another as well as cooperate in various ways with the **arbiter** of these interactions being the **masses**, via their **direct actions** and via their will reflected indirectly through the **state machine**.

-109- Initially the communist sector would be very small and awkward. **It would not be as efficient** as the capitalist sector and would **require state intervention** to keep it alive so that it could grow. Of what use would it be if it were **not strong enough** to compete against the capitalist sector and survive on its own? To answer this question we can paraphrase Ben Franklin who, upon witnessing an early demonstration of a lighter-than-air balloon, was asked "of what use is this?" Franklin replied "**Of what use is a new born baby?**" The communist sector would be increasingly supported by the masses as it demonstrates that it had the present and future ability to **serve their needs** far better than the capitalist sector. It would **grow and develop** and eventually **overwhelm** the capitalist sector which (via the intervention of the workers' state) gives it nourishment in its infancy much like the white of an egg gives nourishment to a growing chick embryo.

-110- During the transition period, the state apparatus would act as a defensive **shield** to protect the interests of workers and the majority of society from the **economic**

might and powerful corrupting influence of the capitalist class which would be in **constant motion** towards subverting the workers' dictatorship. Such a defensive shield could not successfully hold off attack forever and furthermore would be extremely expensive, in terms of the **social distortions** that it creates, to maintain. The development of a **sword** is the only way to end the contest for once and for all. That sword would be the communist sector which, once more mature, would be able to out-produce the capitalist sector by orders of magnitude (i.e.: hundreds or thousands fold) with a **vastly higher productivity of labor**. Once the communist sector had proven itself **fully capable** of providing for **all the material and cultural needs of the masses**, it would be allowed to absorb whatever remnants of the capitalist sector would be worth absorbing.

Cooperative Anarchy

-111- Now let's consider the meaning of the term "cooperative anarchy" which Mark assures us is just another way of describing capitalism. But let's examine it not as described by either Mark or Ben but as described by the **actual pioneers who are experimenting** with creating a form of wealth that, to a significant degree, lies **outside of the bounds of commodity production**.

-112- The December 1994 issue of Dr. Dobbs' Developer

Update (a journal for software developers) features as its lead an article on the development of the next generation of standards for the internet. It turns out that the development of standards for the internet is a very important matter. A great many people are affected. Different views on what the standards should be clash and it is important that the resulting decisions are **best for everybody as a whole**. Interestingly, the article focuses more on the **process and philosophy** of people working together to work out common standards than it does on the standards itself. The term "**cooperative anarchy**" has evolved to describe the process by which many kinds of work get done on the internet. The article goes on to quote a section of a technical paper which had a subhead titled "Cooperative Anarchy":

"A **major contributor** to the internet's success is the fact that there is **no single, centralized, point of control or promulgator of policy** for the entire network. This allows individual constituents of the network to tailor their own networks, environments, and policies to suit their own needs. The individual constituents must cooperate only to the degree necessary to ensure that they interoperate. We believe that this decentralized and decoupled nature of the internet must be preserved. Only a **minimum amount of centralization or forced coop-**

eration will be **tolerated** by the community as a whole." (emphasis added)

-114- The Dr. Dobbs article goes on to note that much of the work involved in setting policy and standards on the internet is done on a volunteer basis but that this self-appointed collection of largely **unpaid volunteers** has accomplished **vastly better results** than were accomplished in the setting of standards for OSI (the dominant standard for local area computer networks) which involved negotiations among **paid representatives of corporations**. One can imagine the dynamics involved as the common interest as well as technical considerations tend to get overwhelmed by corporate political infighting.

-115- Of particular note is the attitude above toward "**centralization or forced cooperation**". These terms of course correspond to what is often referred to as "**top-down**" methods of organization. The attitude of the above author towards top-down methods reflects the experience of large numbers of people who have worked in this kind of environment. They recognize that to a certain degree and in certain circumstances centralization is necessary but they will accept only the "**least necessary**" degree of this **necessary evil**. What is the problem with centralization? The problem is that independent of

[continued on page 63]

Left-wing neo-conservatives: The reflection of neo-conservatism in socialist thinking

--part one--

Joseph, Detroit

Ben, of the Revolutionary Socialist Study Group (RSSG) of Seattle, recently has released teasers trumpeting his writing on the "cooperative anarchy" of the future. (1) These articles from Ben show his view of eternal capitalism. Oh yes, he talks about anarchism and communism and classless society but he pictures the future as having such features of capitalism as separate enterprises in anarchic competition with one another.

Fred (RSSG) has a similar picture, but no longer calls it communism. As well, he praises today's imperialism as having overcome the reactionary features of the past and become an era of "unprecedented economic growth and political and cultural transformation of regions" which has "transcended the old social contradictions and struggles of the past." (2) And we shall see that Fred's "socialist" theorizing amounts to projecting various features of today's capitalism into the future. Meanwhile his co-thinker Jason in the RSSG doesn't talk about the future at all, but enthuses over the PLO-Israeli mini-state deal--why, IMF money and Israeli capital is supposed to be invested in the mini-state. (3) This is something of a concrete application of Fred's

view of the new, improved imperialism.

From an eternal anarchy of production to imperialism transcending the class struggles of capitalism: the RSSG has been trapped by the neo-conservative mood of our time. The RSSG pride themselves on the "realism" with which they fight revolutionary illusions. But as we have seen before, and shall see again, their views are not based on today's reality. Today the increasing poverty and misery, the growing environmental dangers, and the never-ending national conflict present a somber picture of what the rule of the capitalist marketplace means for the majority of the people of this planet.

No, it's not reality that gives plausibility to the pictures of Ben and Fred and Jason. It is simply the pressure of triumphant neo-conservatism, which is imposing its views as the new "common sense" of our period.

For quite some time, the mainstream ideology of the American bourgeoisie was liberalism. Whatever the bourgeoisie did, no matter how many Vietnamese it napalmed, no matter how many black activists were murdered, no matter how many strikes were smashed, the main bourgeois

ideologues trumpeted their liberalism. Today liberalism is the "L" word; even the liberals are rushing to embrace conservative themes: and the magic of the marketplace is the alpha and omega of bourgeois wisdom.

It's not just Newt Gingrich who expresses this conservatism, but liberals. It is not just liberals, but would-be radicals who can see no further than the tip of their noses. On the left, reformism has always capitulated to dominant bourgeois ideology. So it's not surprising that today it reflects neo-conservative thinking.

When the Marxist-Leninist Party died, it turned out that the majority on the CC had become disillusioned with revolutionary work and had doubts about socialism, revolutionary theory, the role of the working class, and anti-imperialism. (4) They had taken up features of what the MLP had previously denounced as "liquidationism" --the abandonment of work to build a movement to express the revolutionary aspirations of the proletariat. Today this liquidationism fits in with the neo-conservative mood. It includes: turning aside from Marxism-Leninism, and from revolutionary theory in gener-

al: the denigration of party-building;

an inability to envision an alternative to the marketplace;

the downplaying of the issues of ownership and social system in favor of the worship of efficiency; a degradation of materialism, from laughing off revolutionary dialectics to a vague spiritualism of one sort or another; and it has even joined with neo-conservatism in J. Edgar Hoover-style "Stalin-baiting" of anyone to the left of them.(5)

In this first part of my reply to Ben, I will highlight some features of this neo-conservatism as it comes up in the RSSG. In part two, I will outline Ben's method. In subsequent parts I will deal in more detail with some of the theoretical issues he raises.

The abandonment of communism

The spread of neo-conservatism has gone so far that communism and socialism are suspect in the eyes of many or most members of the RSSG. Ben himself briefly refers to this. He writes that "Neither Fred nor Jason seems to consider himself a communist at this point. This is fine with me. I don't consider them communists either." (6)

If they're not communists, what are they? Do they still see an alternative to capitalism and, if so, what?

Well, let's see how other members of the RSSG see Fred and Jason's views. Ben writes of "the prejudices

of those younger and less experienced members of our study group who fail to see any problems at all in the views of Fred and Jason and who consider talk of going beyond capitalism to be 'fantastic' ('fantastic' not in the positive sense but in the sense of being outside the realm of matters which are possible to intelligently discuss)." (*Ibid.*, the parenthetical remark is Ben's.)

Indeed Ben points out that "from now until the end of time 'MONEY MAKES THE WORLD GO 'ROUND'" seems pretty reasonable to many RSSG members. But, he says, "Fred and Jason are at least in a formal sense **agnostic** (i.e.: unconvinced) on this question..."(7) How reassuring. Fred and Jason aren't 100% convinced yet that money-economy (i.e. capitalism and the marketplace) is eternal. But they realize that this is where their theories are leading them.

A funny "revolutionary socialist study group", the RSSG is. In it we find "revolutionary socialists" who regard any talk of going beyond capitalism as stupid, idle chatter. They polemicize against class organizing. And they think money makes the world go round, now and forever. Maybe the RSSG should be called the neo-conservative coffee klatsch.

The magic of the marketplace

When did such ideas first get expressed?

As the MLP carried out a program to study Soviet history and see how and why the proletarian revolution got diverted into revisionist state capitalism, the concept of socialism was restudied. The **Workers Advocate Supplement** carried material on Marx and Engels's conception of socialism, as well as criticism of Soviet conceptions of the '30s and earlier. This was a time when the MLP looked at basic ideas about what is and what isn't socialism. Given the overall atmosphere of the times, it seems that some comrades ended up accepting marketplace ideas as the only alternative to revisionist state capitalism. Fred ended up laying stress not on the class and ownership relationships in a society, but on its efficiency and "rationality". He alleged that the Soviet Union had implemented the Marxist views on eliminating capitalist ownership--and look at the mess that resulted.

This led him to scorn workplace leaflets because the task was to put forward a more efficient way to restructure industry. He began to sneer at phrases denouncing profiteering and instead concentrated on how industries could be more competitive in the world market and how value calculations could be more rational. (8)

Fred held that a better society would be run on the

basis of a more accurate calculation of the value of the things it produced--value being the number of labor-hours that went into the production of them. It was wrong calculations that led to inefficiency and economic crisis. And, he hypothesized, inadequate communications technology might be the key to the existence of class division. (9)

How times change. At one time Fred wrote that "value itself must be abolished", but now he believes that proper value calculations are the key to the future. (10) Yet the labor theory of value isn't a theory of the most efficient way to produce goods, but an explanation of how capitalism works, and how exploitation takes place. The prices of most (not all) commodities oscillate around their value, and Marxism analyzed what that value was under capitalism. Value explains how the marketplace operates under capitalism, not the best way in which to produce goods. (11)

I will go into more detail on this in later in this series. For now, it suffices to note that Fred's theory that value rules the world--and will do so even more strictly and accurately in a future society--means that, in essence, the economy would continue to be run by money and the marketplace.

The marketplace and the environment

As Fred developed his theories, he found that his

framework led him back repeatedly to capitalist solutions. He wrote that "One thing that strikes me is the fact that the Western model has many features which seek economic rationality and therefore continue to advance society....This rationality is sought indirectly as a by-product of sectional profitability,..." (12)

Of course, Marxism has always analyzed the dynamism of capitalism compared to past exploiting systems. It has pointed to the rapidity and global scale with which capitalism develops--and the rapidity and global scale with which it commits crimes and rapes the toilers and the environment. But the way Fred saw it, he had discovered a new world--the "rationality tendencies" in capitalism. He wrote off the crimes of capitalism as simply mysterious "delays" in adopting "rational policies" and not an inherent part of capitalist rationality. In Fred's terminology, "rational" meant that various features of capitalism were not specific to this people-eating system, but were inherent in the very nature of production. So he sought to preserve the core of these rationality tendencies and purify them for the future.

What are these "rationality tendencies"?

One example is that "credit and speculation seeks planning of future changes in economic activity, such as research or pollution control. Exchange value calculation seeks to balance the relative

benefits of expanding allocation to this or that product."

So here we have it. Credit and speculation are supposedly motors for pollution control. The correct calculation of exchange value, backed by the huge forces of financial speculation, will protect the environment. This is chapter and verse from the late Warren Brookes' neo-conservative columns in the **Detroit News**. Not that Fred read these columns of course--but his framework led him to the same idea.

And what a concept! What careful observation of reality! In a world where the marketplace, with its scale of operations multiplied manifold by credit and speculation, is stripping Brazil, East Asia, New Zealand, etc. of forests! In a world where more and more untested chemicals are put into production each year! But don't worry. Just calculate exchange value correctly, and the environment will be protected.

This was no passing fancy for Fred. He returned several times to this theme.

For example, consider his criticism of Frank's mini-pamphlet on Pacific Northwest timber that appeared in the last **Workers' Advocate Supplement**. Frank wrote that a socialist society would seek to protect the environment and that "Such decisions are not based on what yields the highest rate of profit,..." (13) Fred protested that all decisions had to be based on the highest rate of return, properly and rationally calculated. He wrote that

"It is not accurate to counterpoise social and cultural demands of the people to overall economic efficiency,...A socialist society would want to utilize all its labor resources,...to produce the maximum amount of social wealth. Conservation would not contradict this, since in the long run conservation would yield more useful wealth for humans than exhausting resources." (14) Such reasoning reminds one of the usual neo-conservative arguments that corporations, if properly led and free from do-gooder interference, will protect natural resources because it is more profitable to do so.

Fred also objected to Steve Peterson's polemic against the anti-people views of Earth First! concerning the "population bomb". Peterson connected environmental issues to the economic and social system. Fred fumed about Peterson's "talk about profits, capitalism, socialism, etc.". Why "without any ideas of how a socialist economy might organize differently, condemnation of profit-seeking is barren rhetoric." (15) It's now clear that Fred wanted a discussion of the digital infrastructure and better value calculations. Mere talk about social systems was just as old-hat to him as liberal catchwords to Newt Gingrich.

Ben and the marketplace

Ben however claims to be a Marxist who has gone be-

yond the marketplace. He jumps up and down about how he has transcended money and the marketplace. Why, he proclaims that Marx is alive! Why, he is above Fred and Jason and their prejudiced followers!

But his differences with Fred and Jason are mainly cosmetic. When you look at the content of Ben's views, they are close to Fred's. In fact, he gives the same example of the marketplace and the environment. Unlike Fred, he doesn't talk about value. But does this mean he has departed from the marketplace ideology? Not at all! Instead he praises the market mechanism directly (without "formally" calling it the market mechanism).

He writes: "Consider an example. Two similar products are available. One tends to use resources that **endanger an ecosystem** and the other **requires more labor**. Or, similarly, the production of one or the other may indirectly affect the **living conditions of people in Bangladesh**....The decisions of the masses, as consumers (as individuals or via organizations that choose products), as workers (as individuals or via organizations similar to unions) and as shapers of public opinion (again, as individuals or via participation in economic, political or cultural organizations) would determine the proportion of the two competing productions which accumulate to the public wealth." (16)

So let's see. One product poisons Bangladesh but can be produced easily, and the other is safe, but uses up more "public wealth". Should the Bangladeshis be poisoned? Let the consumers decide! If 50% of the consumers are concerned about safety, then the Bangladeshis will only get 50% of the poison; if only 10% care, then 90% of the poison will do its ugly work.

Ben has simply put the marketplace in charge of poisoning. Note that he isn't talking of the people voting to decide whether to clean up their environment. For him, that would be bureaucratic super-centralism. No, he is talking of the "proportion" of two products being decided by, for example, the choices of consumers as they ask for one or the other product. The marketplace will decide. This is a solution based on neo-conservative marketplace ideas.

Neo-conservatism blames all the ills of capitalism on "big government". They say the collapse of "communism" (referring to the state capitalist regimes) proves that the unrestricted market must reign supreme. Environmental bans are among their targets.

And Ben ends up with a similar solution. He is at pains to find a way to protect the environment *without* administrative action of any sort. And he looks back to the marketplace. (17)

Even under capitalism, they don't always do things this way, although the

neo-conservatives would like to. Various poisons are straight-out banned for domestic use (although American corporations may still manufacture them in Bangladesh as an exercise in the chauvinism of money-making--"we only care about the health of our own nationality"--and of imperialist bullying of poor countries).

Take the poisoning of inner-city children by the lead in house paints. Even in the U.S., whether to use lead-based or lead-free paint isn't left up to the consumer or to the factory producing paint. Lead-based house paint is simply banned. (Oh, what horrible "Stalinist super-centralism", and right in the U.S.! Or, as the conservatives used to say when I was young, "creeping socialism".) Of course, the capitalists dragged their feet for decades on this issue, but eventually they banned such paint.

But in Ben's utopia, there would be a certain proportion of houses still getting fresh coats of lead-based paint unless absolutely everyone said "no".

Anarchy of production

In general, Ben envisages communist economy as consisting of independent economic units which are in competition with each other. He has no understanding of how a planned economy can be anything but "Stalinist super-centralism". He can see central planning agencies only

as busybody tyrants, directing absolutely everything, smashing local initiative, and preventing the trying out of different approaches or the discussion of differing ideas. He is afraid of any formal authority in a socialist country, or even of the administrative apparatus that remains in a communist country.

But how then for society to run production as a whole? And without that, there is no socialism.

Well, there is no way. Ben ends up taking the capitalist anarchy of production as the alternative to revisionist tyranny and bureaucracy. This too is typical neo-conservatism, which shouts that without the competitive drive for profits in the marketplace there will only be feudalism.

Ben conceives his system of independent competing "production units" as one of "cooperative anarchy". But he goes bonkers denying that this is the same thing as the anarchy of production. No, he says, he envisions anarchy, but it is "cooperative anarchy". He thinks you have changed something when you have renamed it.

When Ben first made this claim, Mark in reply pointed out that Ben was idealizing capitalism. Adam Smith claimed that the clash of private interests gives rise to public good through the "invisible hand" of market forces. Ben says that the anarchy of competing production units gives rise to "fantastic amounts of material and social

wealth" by being "somehow...coordinated". But coordination that just "somehow" happens is nothing but another name for Adam Smith's "invisible hand".

Ben jumps up and down that he is not talking of the anarchy of production. Why "cooperative anarchy" is something else. All it has in common with the anarchy or production is the word "anarchy", says Ben. (18) What about the concept of anarchy, Ben? Doesn't the word refer to a concept?

Ben's "cooperative anarchy" refers to the relation between "production units" (factories, enterprises, etc.). What else is anarchy among production units than the anarchy of production? Isn't a red sweater the same as a sweater that is red?

What replaces the invisible hand?

Yet Ben shouts that now he has caught Mark. He says that the brains of his critics are addled by Stalinism. Trumpets blare; fireworks are sent up; he writes Seattle 72 and 74 (a request to the **CWV Theoretical Journal** to print part of Seattle 72), and begins his victory party.

But wait a minute. If Ben's "cooperative anarchy" isn't the anarchy of production, then how does he see it giving rise to cooperation? He has ruled out planning in favor of anarchy. And he has also ruled out the unplanned result of competing forces, Adam

Smith's "invisible hand". Very well, what takes the place of the "invisible hand"?

In Seattle #68, where Ben put forward "cooperative anarchy", he only told us that cooperation takes place "somehow". That's not much to go on in building socialist society. Until he explains it a bit better, he is dancing to the tune of his own mindlessness.

Well, it takes Ben until paragraph 98 before he feels safe to get around to this key point. He finally asks, with respect to his "cooperative anarchy", the 64-million-dollar question: "What might assist production units in a communist economy to coordinate their activity into a harmonious whole?"

Finally, the key question. Is Ben relying on Adam Smith's "invisible hand", or not?

So what's the answer?

Ben has no answer.

In paragraph 98, Ben raises the question only to evade it. Instead of answering the question, he gives a one-sided description of capitalist crisis. Well, Ben, we're waiting.

In paragraph 99 Ben gives his view of how revisionist economy works. He carefully avoids any mention of the question of class domination and ownership in society and attributes the problems of state capitalism solely to bad planning. (19) So what's the alternative to revisionist tyranny? He simply contrasts the bad revisionist economy to "free-market"

capitalism" and "marketplace mechanisms".

That's clear, isn't it? The one clear, concrete answer Ben can give is the marketplace. But as to anything else, we're still waiting.

In paragraph 100 he tells us the masses will decide. But he doesn't tell us how.

No, wait, he does have one suggestion! In some particular industries at some particular times, there will be "central planning bodies".

Thus his only concrete example in this paragraph is "central planning bodies", which he otherwise regards as Stalinist super-centralism, repressive, incompatible with mass initiative, typified by the miserable Soviet bureaucratic tyranny, and worthy only of "religious sectarians" like Mark and me. He was supposed to be describing how his cooperative anarchy is superior to central planning, and so far his only anarchist-utopian alternative is--central planning, but not for the whole economy.

Let's look at this further. Either these central planning bodies are compatible with mass initiative and promote it (and even require mass initiative as the precondition for successful work), or they aren't. If they are compatible with and promote mass initiative, then why not have them for the economy as a whole? If they are enemies of mass initiative, then where does Ben think he will find large numbers of liberated, free worker-intellectuals of the

future who will consent to slave away in the repressive, Stalinist industries, while watching all the other worker-intellectuals living a free and happy life in the section of the economy under "cooperative anarchy"?

In any case, we're still waiting for Ben to describe any method of coordination other than either Adam Smith's "invisible hand" or some form of planning.

In paragraph 101 Ben tells us "There are other ways of involving the masses in the economic life of society."

Well, finally. Let's look at them.

He lists several ways: a) as consumers; b) as producers; c) as shapers of public opinion; d) in mass organizations which wield "no formal authority whatsoever". (Ben's emphasis)

Suppose all these different ways of making economic decisions clash. Suppose public opinion wants a factory to be run one way, but the workers at that factory insist on another way? What happens? Ben is silent.

Suppose workers at two different factories disagree. Who decides then? Ben is silent.

And isn't saying that the "consumers" decide another way of referring to market forces? Remember Ben's example of how to decide whether Bangladeshis are to be poisoned by a bad product?

Or again, if there is no body with formal authority,

exactly how does the public opinion manifest itself? It isn't sufficient

for a lot of people to simply think the same thought in unison. But Ben is silent here too.

So here too Ben has evaded the question.

Paragraph 102 simply elaborates this point again with examples, verifying what we have said about Ben's views. This is where Ben describes how the marketplace will decide how to deal with a product whose production poisons Bangladeshis: how many Bangladeshis die will depend on how many consumers buy the poisonous product. Heaven forbid that a communist society might actually ban a product that poisons Bangladeshis, or that the Bangladeshis might ban it themselves. This would be taking away the freedom of consumers to have their pound of Bangladeshi flesh. It would be super-centralism, bureaucracy, and every other violation of the anarchist-technocratic utopia. What's a few hundred thousand poisoned Bangladeshis in exchange for the freedom of the marketplace?

But onwards.

Paragraph 103 says that "there might be different and opposing" economic planning bodies. You see, Ben isn't opposed to central planning, so long as there are a multitude of conflicting plans in operation at the same time.

But who decides when the planning bodies disagree? Ben is silent. Or then again,

Ben says, there might only be a single agency, but it would be in a constant state of civil war between "opposing or competing political, economic or cultural philosophies". As well, he says, "competing material interests" might operate in the agency, even in the early stages of a communist society. Well, once again, how do decisions get taken? Which side predominates at any time? (20)

And why does a repressive, Stalinist agency become efficient and socialist just because it has internal conflict?

In paragraph 104 Ben tries another approach--an even bigger dose of charlatanism. He goes in for a lot of big fancy phrases, hoping people will think "he must be profound, because we can't understand any of this." But actually he is whistling in the dark.

For example, he assures one and all that his idea of coordination makes "the action of the marketplace under capitalism" look "**infinitely crude**", and Ben puts it in BOLD-FACE. Wouldn't it be better if he simply told us how this coordination was to be achieved and let us judge for ourselves how infinitely wonderful it is?

But no. That's not Ben's way. Instead he goes on to make grand pronouncements: Why, he says, "economic, political and cultural struggles would be utterly and completely merged and indistinguishable from one another." Or at least, Ben's ideas about them would be utterly and

completely merged and indistinguishable from utter nonsense.

And finally, in paragraph 105, Ben comes up with yet another answer. This is his last, his final answer. Coordination will be accomplished through "consciousness". It seems that you don't need institutions to express this consciousness. You're not allowed to ask how the consciousness expresses itself. Just trust in "consciousness". Apparently this is a spiritual touch--the great universal consciousness will come down and reveal itself through its prophet Ben. And just as believers think the Church is higher and purer than the world of mere material concerns, so Ben assures us that "consciousness would also be the primary, the highest and the **ultimate form of wealth**." (Ben's emphasis)

Moving on, there is paragraph 106. (Sorry, Ben never has a final answer. The fast talk just goes on and on.) This time he tells us that it is all in his article "On the Transition to a Communist Economy". However, he won't show us this article. We can imagine why.

Ben pictures capitalist society

Insofar as Ben's picture of "cooperative anarchy" describes anything, they are purified and glorified pictures of today's capitalist society. Ben describes "central planning agencies" that only plan particular industries, while the overall economy remains un-

planned. That's just modern monopoly capitalism, where the giant multinational corporations plan vast empires, but the overall result is determined by the marketplace.

Ben also describes a society where consumers, employees, public opinion, and mass organizations have some input on economic decisions, but don't have "formal authority". That's an idealization of what happens in any modern developed country. There are a lot of organizations and sectors with some input, "formal authority" for most is restricted, and the dollar rules. Of course, under capitalism, sometimes mass organizations do have a bit of formal authority--for example, unions can negotiate binding contracts.

Or again, Ben describes central planning agencies split into competing interests. Here Ben has inadvertently described the state planning boards of revisionist countries. Far from the revisionist countries running their economy as one smoothly running machine, the revisionist economies were split into rival interests. This didn't give rise to dynamism and progress but to the various absurdities and stagnation of revisionist economy. We mentioned this briefly above.

Ben just can't get beyond capitalist ideas. His believes that cooperation will arise through the conflict of independent producers. He is simply paraphrasing Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations.

When Ben wrote that Marx isn't dead, he apparently meant to say that Adam Smith isn't dead. Didn't Marx think highly of the classical authors of bourgeois political economy including Adam Smith? Now there's a part of Marxism that Ben can identify with.

A crippling framework

We will return to these questions later on in this series. This will take us into the study of some Marxist economics including such questions as the meaning of value, and the relations of large-scale production to freedom, and of diversity to planning.

For now, however, let's consider how neo-conservatism enters the RSSG. Fred and Ben and the RSSG are not capitalists or even accountants. Fred and Jason, who praise imperialism, are not executives or stockholders but part of the working intelligentsia. Ben, who tends more to a Jeffersonian-democratic view of small-scale independent ("parallel") enterprises competing with each other, is not a small businessperson. But the collapse of revisionist state capitalism and the growth of the world economy means, in their eyes, that there is no alternative to the basic mechanisms of capitalism and bourgeois democracy.

Marx pointed out the activists of the petty-bourgeois democratic trend in mid-19th century France were also not simply motivated by self-interest. He pointed out

that their demands against the monarchists which had been ruling France, no matter in what revolutionary phrases they were formulated, were for "a transformation within the bounds of the petty bourgeoisie." But why could they see no further than a purified marketplace of small proprietors, which they hoped to rid of class struggle, rather than take the stand of organizing the class struggle? Marx explained, presumably talking about the best of these representatives of the petty-bourgeois, that: "...one must not form the narrow-minded notion that the petty bourgeoisie, on principle, wishes to enforce an egoistic class interest. Rather, it believes that the **special** conditions of its emancipation are the **general** conditions within the frame of which alone modern society can be saved and the class struggle avoided. Just as little must one imagine that the democratic representatives are indeed all shopkeepers or enthusiastic champions of shopkeepers. According to their education and their individual position they may be as far apart as heaven from earth. What makes them representatives of the petty bourgeoisie is the fact that in their minds they do not get beyond the limits which the latter do not get beyond in life, that they are consequently driven, theoretically, to the same problems and solutions to which material interest and social position drive the latter practically." (underlining added) (21)

Our "socialist" neo-conservatives thinkers do not wish to serve the capitalists, and some of them even mouth phrases about the class struggle (although Fred has gone way beyond that and Jason polemicizes against the call for revolutionary class organizing). But they have lost faith in any alternative to the marketplace and bourgeois politics. In their minds they do not get beyond the limits which the corporations and bourgeois democracy have in practice. Their viewpoint is that of the reformist petty-bourgeoisie, dazzled by capitalist growth but complaining of the crises and struggles that "somehow" just keep erupting. And so whether they are being "realistic" in drawing up plans for the development of Palestine (Jason), or letting their fancy soar in dreams of the future information era (Ben), they simply embellish the current neo-conservative "common sense" of capitalism. <>

Notes for part one

(1) Ben put forward a vision of the future as "cooperative anarchy" in "Ask Comrade Science" (Seattle #68, December 11, 1994). He wrote that the dictatorship of the proletariat will be "nothing but the most marvelously efficient cooperative anarchy in which the actions of many independent, conflicting and parallel processes will somehow be coordinated to create fantastic amounts of material and social

wealth without the necessity for any clumsy, burdensome and inefficient bureaucracy."

Mark replied, challenging Ben to release his articles on the subject and adding that "...Let's see, a society of independent producers who, despite conflicting with one another, 'somehow' produce a heaven on earth. Ben's 'cooperative anarchy' is just another way of describing capitalism, another way of praising the 'invisible hand' which unites the independent, conflicting entities. Socialism must overcome anarchy of production, it must overcome independent processes that are somehow coordinated. Ben is right to be upset about the bureaucracy that developed in the former Soviet Union. But opposing bureaucracy without opposing anarchy of production is fitting for the Chamber of Commerce, not a socialist. And no matter what Ben imagines, his anarchy will, like in all other capitalist societies, give rise to a repressive bureaucracy--no matter how many computers exist in that society!" (Detroit #69, "Ben loses his nerve", Detroit 17, 1994.

Ben replied in Seattle #72 with page after page of abuse against Mark. He also went into pages of praise of "cooperative anarchy" which, however, neglected to mention one little thing--how cooperation and efficiency emerges from the anarchy of independent production units. ("How Mark Uses Stalin's Theory to Attempt to Extinguish the Living Flame of Marxism (and gets

burned for his efforts)", December 24, 1994, Seattle #72) Either there is a planned economy, or there isn't. But Ben wants it both ways. It's anarchy, but it's cooperative.

Ben then wrote to the editors of the **CWV Theoretical Journal**, claiming that Mark had made "a blunder the magnitude of which is difficult to overestimate." (Seattle #74, December 26, 1994)

(2) Fred's view of the dynamic new imperialism can be found in his article "What can be learned from the bloodbath regarding approaches to investigation" (Seattle #41). I comment in my article "Censorship, imperialism and revisionism" (Detroit #28). Both articles are in the **Chicago Workers' Voice Theoretical Journal** #2, March 30, 1994.

Fred returned to the subject in part 3 of his "bloodbath" article. In the first endnote he eulogizes imperialism, denies that it is still in the "basic capitalist framework", and says it has transcended the old social contradictions. See the **CWV Theoretical Journal** #4, Sept. 1, 1994. I commented on his denial of class struggle and revolution in "Plebeian class consciousness and socialist revolution" in Detroit #31 in the same issue of the **CWV**

(3) See the debate on Palestine carried in the **CWV Theoretical Journal** #3, June 1, 1994 and #5, Dec. 1, 1994. Jason and Mark's latest replies

(Seattle #75 and Detroit #72) will probably be in Issue #6.

(4) However, the emerging CC majority never had a majority on the National Executive Committee and **Workers' Advocate** group, which directed the MLP's national publications. This makes it hard to see the evolution of the CC majority in the pages of the **Workers' Advocate**. It was edited in a different spirit from the emerging neo-conservatism, and were gradually strangled rather than being taken over. This accounts for the bitterness, in the debate prior to the congress dissolving the MLP, with which Michael, a member of the CC majority, spoke of how horrible work on the **Workers' Advocate** was for him.

(5) Ben's Stalin-baiting is, in part, intended to hide the fact that he and the RSSG have abandoned anti-revisionism. They don't talk of Stalinist revisionism, but just of the individual Stalin. The late Marxist-Leninist Party tirelessly fought Soviet revisionism, and dealt with Stalin from that standpoint. By way of contrast, the RSSG, in its only leaflet, did not denounce either "revisionism" or "Stalinism" or "Stalin". In fact, Fred--who edited that leaflet--holds that Stalinist-style society was "progressive", despite being oppressive. (See Fred' "Errors in 'the bloodbath, part I'", Seattle #46, **CWVTJ#3**. I commented on Fred's views in "Is revisionism progressive?",

Detroit #32, March 24, 1994, which is not in the **CWVTJ**.)

But Ben and the RSSG wave a bloody portrait of Stalin to scare people off from thinking. Ben denounces any opposition to his ideas as "Stalin's thinking". There is no evidence; it's just neo-conservative red-baiting.

Wait, here's the evidence. In "How Mark Uses Stalin's Theory..." Ben complains that the MLP allegedly had "Stalin's super-centralized party architecture" (paragraph 65). The proof--Ray's letter of September 1988 was "kept hidden from the party base" and thereby "rendered powerless to save the party". A single letter--that's the proof. That's absurd.

But let's take a look: actually it was Ray (now of the RSSG) who didn't circulate his letter widely. Even Ben admits that Ray told him this. (Seattle #22) And Ben holds that such documents can't be circulated without the author's permission, even if the author has previously released the document to various party units. On this basis, in the last period Ben has helped suppress the circulation of a number of documents.

Back to Ray. In 1991 Ray further developed his ideas in a proposal to drop the hammer and sickle from party literature. The Seattle Branch of the MLP even implemented this proposal on its own. When the Central Committee disagreed with this proposal, Ray said there was no need to circulate

his document. Why, the Seattle Branch would restore the hammer and sickle to its leaflets. I on the contrary insisted that the whole party should discuss the matter, and that it shouldn't be brushed under the rug. And I wrote in the MLP's **Information Bulletin**, kicking off a discussion on this.

And guess what? Ben denounces me as a Stalinist for this. He has spent page after page denouncing me for bringing issues to the whole party. He calls it such names as "incitement"--i.e. the party members often disagreed with Ray or Fred of the RSSG. As I showed in my article "Censorship, Imperialism and Revisionism" (Detroit #28, **CWVTJ#2**), Ben doesn't really care about the right to circulate documents, which he regards as merely "formal". He is way beyond such alleged mere formality. His real definition of Stalinism is that I and others don't agree with him.

As to the MLP's "party architecture", the MLP both in theory and practice put great stress on the local initiative of its branches and the consciousness of its members. Ben however is unable to comprehend how an organization could have both local initiative and centralism.

(6) "How Mark Uses Stalin's Theory...", Seattle #75, paragraph 24. It is notable that Ben--the supposed high minded supporter of truth, information, and the computerized way of life--holds that infor-

mation must be judged on whether it is useful for one's political purposes, not whether it is true.

For example, in paragraph 30 Ben admits that Fred and Jason are "clearly wrong" on a number of points on which they have been criticized by Mark and me. But this is supposedly irrelevant, because Mark and me are bad guys. He devotes 18 of his numbered paragraphs to explaining that he won't spell out his criticisms of Fred and Jason--after all, criticizing Fred and Jason might help the bad guys. So are Fred and Jason social-democrats? Ben says that yes, they sort of are--but we shouldn't say so, because this would help the bad guys. It's OK Ben, you can say they are social-democrats, because I actually have a different characterization of them.

(7) Seattle #72, paragraph 96. the capitalization is Ben's.

Fred and Jason aren't sure, Ben says, "in a formal sense". This presumably means that if you ask Fred or Jason in precisely those words, they'll say they're not sure. But if you consider the content of Fred's views, one sees that it implies the eternal existence of money. Indeed, earlier, in Seattle #60, Ben says that it is Fred he is opposing on the issue of "will money make the world go 'round til the end of time".

(8) See Frank's article "For Proletarian Socialist Revolution" in the **CWV Theoretical Journal** #3, June 1, 1994.

This fine article goes into Fred's replacement of class struggle and revolutionary agitation with a program of structural reform. It dwells at some length on the preparation of a leaflet on the Northwest timber industry, thus dealing with environmental issues as well as the exploitation of the workforce. Fred had edited Frank's mini-pamphlet on timber in order to produce the RSSG's only leaflet. It turned out that Fred was upset about the denunciation of profiteering and profit-seeking. He wrote a letter to Frank in which he stated that "One could assume that the alternative to profits and competition is losses and monopoly, and there is a strong logic in the experience of state capitalism to back this up."

Frank soon left the RSSG for political reasons. The former MLP circles in Seattle split into two groups.

(9) In a letter to me of April 25, 1993, Fred hypothesized about what caused the development of Soviet bureaucracy. He put the finger on communications technology. "It may be the case that a socialist economy is simply impossible without a digital infrastructure."

I replied later that year to Fred. Later in this series I will publish the complete text of this exchange.

(10) Fred's formulation appears in his article "Rough thoughts on Pete's notes on the speech, 'The Technical

and cultural basis for workers' socialism in the modern world'" (the **Workers Advocate Supplement**, Feb. 20, 1992, vol. 8, #2). I criticized it in "Some notes on theory" (**Supplement**, May 20, 1992, Vol. 8, #5). Value isn't abolished, but "whether it is a real and meaningful concept depends on whether the system is still capitalist, or has communist ownership by society as a whole." Value can neither be abolished by government decree, nor resuscitated by 100,000 economists laboring "to assign a numerical rating to every useful article in sight."

(11) Indeed, as capitalism develops, prices oscillate not around the labor-value of a commodity, but around a related but different measure. A certain correction is made to the labor-value -- although this correction averages to zero when taken over the whole economy. This is explained in Volume III of Marx's **Capital**. This by itself strongly suggests that value is not the "rational" measure of a product, but the description of a social relationship that exists only at a certain point in human history.

(12) This is again from Fred's letter of April 25, 1993 to me, as are the next few quotes from Fred.

Fred also said that the Western model "has contradictory tendencies too" and not just rationality tendencies. But he saw these backward tendencies mainly as resistance to proper calculations. He wrote

"somehow there appear to be delays in adjustment to rational policies, resistance to adjustment, and adjustment through crisis which interrupts economic development." He overlooks that capitalist growth and capitalist crisis are two sides of the same process of capitalist rationality. No, the bad things just "somehow" appear.

(13) **The Workers Advocate Supplement**, Aug. 10, 1993, p. 31, col. 2. See the lead article "Capitalist profiteering and capitalist competition are at the root of layoffs in the Northwest timber industry: Save all the old-growth! Make the government and industry fairly compensate unemployed timber workers!"

(14) See the discussion of this in the section "Fred on political economy" in my article "Some miscellaneous points", Detroit #14, Nov. 18, 1993.

Note that Fred himself admitted that "We might not be able to measure this wealth [environmental values--Jph.] in the same terms as the immediate use of resources, but that is another issue." (Seattle #20, point c) This admits that there are two separate measures. So Frank was right to say that the protection of the environment could not be based on preserving the highest rate of return. Yet Fred, having conceded that his demand to calculate environmental values in the same way as

other "useful wealth" is impossible, insists on it anyway. This is an example of how neo-conservatism is not based on reality, but is imposed against reality.

(15) Peterson's spirited exchange with Don Smith of Earth First! can be found in the December 20, 1992 issue of the **Workers Advocate Supplement** (vol. 8, #7). Fred's objection is in the **WAS** of 20 May 1993 (vol. 9, #3). I replied to Fred in the article "Population, technology and environmental devastation" in the **WAS** for July 1, 1993 (vol. 9, #4); and Peterson replied to Fred in "Population bomb: still a dud" in the last **WAS**, Aug. 10, 1993 (vol. 9, #5).

(16) "How Mark Uses Stalin's Theory...", Seattle #72, paragraph 102, Ben's emphasis.

(17) Another capitalist solution is to put a dollar figure on the environment or on human life, and then decide what is most profitable. Some U.S. regulatory agencies have an official value for a human life. This is essentially Fred's solution of readjusting value calculations.

(18) Seattle #72, paragraph 86.

(19) In my article "Some notes on theory (2)" in the **Workers Advocate Supplement** of July 25, 1992, I put forward a more realistic picture

of the Soviet state capitalist economy. Ben gets his idea of Soviet economy from the "common sense" of the West--i.e. from the stuff of hack anti-communist editorials. Thus he ignores the role of the class interests and competing individual interests of the bureaucratic ruling class.

(20) Note that Ben assumes that politics will exist forever. He doesn't have a hint of what Engels meant when he pointed out that economic decisions, in a classless society, would lose their political character and become the mere administration of things, not people.

(21) See *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, midway through section 3. <>

BOOK REVIEW

Pete, Detroit

The Proletariat: A Challenge to Western Civilization, by Gustav A. Briefs (1937)

My purpose in reading this book is to try and help with research on the controversial issues raised by Fred, Joe and Michael about composition and stratification of the working class. These issues include:

1) the technical/managerial stratum is proletarian in outlook, and should be the focus of our organizing efforts (Fred);

2) the technical/managerial stratum is important and must be allied with as a first step towards revolution (Joe);

3) the technical/managerial stratum is the largest (or very large) and is the fastest growing social stratum (Joe, Michael);

4) the working class may be on the way to becoming obsolete (Joe).

I thought it would be useful to read some books by mainstream social scientists to get a better grasp on these issues. What I am looking to gain from them is:

I. Hard information

A] What can these authors tell us about classes, and strata within classes, that actually exist?

B] What are the trends? Where have we been, and where are we headed?

II. Methodology

A] How do these authors distinguish classes and strata? What are their criteria? What kind of statistics do they use, and how?

My idea in selecting some mainstream authors is to bend over backwards in dealing with the controversial issues. That is, instead of assuming these ideas to be wrong and using only Marxist sources to refute them, I would use other sources, sources probably acceptable to Fred, Joe and Michael -- for one reason, to get "neutral" facts; for another reason, to try and get a more thorough grasp of alternative (non-Marxist) points of view.

So, here goes with the first book.

Gustav Briefs was a German-American sociologist who wrote his book, *The Proletariat*, during the Great Depression of the 1930s. The book's subtitle sums up pretty well his political position: he's

enthusiastic about Western Civilization, but he's worried about the existence of the proletariat. The proletariat constitutes a challenge to Western values such as individualism and Christian morality. Some way must be found to defuse the proletariat's revolutionary potential. One cannot ignore the proletariat, nor can one simply suppress it (if one maintains Western values of individual rights, etc. -- i.e., if one avoids the fascist option). Some way must be found to integrate the proletariat into Western capitalism. The answer, Briefs believes, is in some combination of social welfare legislation combined with economic and fiscal policies which will stabilize the life of the average working person and provide for some social mobility. His general outlook, in other words, is liberal-labor reformism.

DEFINITION OF CLASSES

So what classes does Briefs recognize in modern society? First of all, following Marx and others he recognizes the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. And how are they distinguished? By ownership, or non-ownership, of property (more specifically, by ownership or non-ownership of the means of production). Proletarians are propertyless per-

sons who must sell their labor power in order to maintain existence. Capitalism is a system that separates ownership of the means of production into one class, and productive labor on the means of production into another class. This is the major criterion Briefs uses.

But as the book goes on Briefs qualifies and changes this. More and more he brings out examples of strata that are propertyless and yet which are not "proletarian" in the sense of being powerless, severely exploited, ground down and oppressed. (Examples: church and state officials, salaried businessmen and administrators, and skilled tradesmen.) He also mentions examples of middle strata which, like the proletariat, are relatively poor and insecure.

So the definition of "proletarian" he eventually settles on emphasizes economic insecurity. The proletariat is a class of people condemned to lifelong servitude and lifelong insecurity of existence. They are subject at any time to lay-off, to loss of job and income; they have nothing to fall back on; they are without insurance and have no pensions or savings to help them through old age and hard times.

In reaching this definition Briefs carefully distinguishes "the proletariat" from "the working class." Workers are those who are propertyless and sell their labor-power; nonetheless, many workers are ex-

empt from the extreme insecurity of a proletarian existence. And their political outlook mirrors this. Briefs notes that the political outlook of more favored strata of the working class is liberal-reformist, not revolutionary.

WORKING CLASS STRATA

Briefs says that in modern industrial countries there are always three major strata of the working class (this is on pages 196-198 in Chapter XII, "The Proletarian Potential of American Labor"):

1) "... a group enjoying a rather well-entrenched position on the labor market. This group enjoys a quasi-monopolistic position; consequently its wages are high and its jobs are relatively secure. In this country [the U.S.], as a rule, the group consists of descendants of the early immigrants ..., claiming skill or whatever their privilege may be as their property and protecting it through their unions. They are a distinct workers' aristocracy. [They] accepted the existing ... basis of society and its capitalistic form. [They] agreed to the equality of interests between employers and employees. For many decades, ... [they] opposed social-security legislation and government regulation in employer-employee relations. ... [Their] occasional verbose radicalism was the radicalism of one who "speaks up." There was no class philosophy behind it."

Members of this stratum do not own the means of production. But they have something that gives them economic security equivalent to ownership of property. They have a skill; they have a license as a master bricklayer or plumber, etc.; they have membership in a craft union, for which they must pay high initiation fees and "know someone" to get into; their union provides them with insurance plans and mutual benefit associations; their high wages and methods of work put them into constant association with bourgeois and petty-bourgeois circles, and this gives them and their children prospects of getting out of the working class entirely.

2) "... a medium group, consisting largely of semi-skilled workers or groups not so capable of developing and upholding a privileged position. In the United States, European immigrants prevail in this group, especially in the mining, iron, and steel industries. What prevented them from being strictly "proletarian" ... was their chance to rise either into the upper level of labor or into other civilian stations of life. ... In periods of crises and depression it voiced radical phraseology.... On the whole, however, it lacked articulation because it lacked organization to a much greater degree than the first group. This second group was the one which, in Europe, filled the cadres of the proletarian movement, of the trade-unions as well as of the

political parties. It was with them that the strength and the massivity of the European labor movement rested. In the United States this group drew its philosophy decidedly from the upper stratum.... The future of the individuals in this group, precarious as at times it was, was far from devoid of opportunities and hope. In so far it could not be termed proletarian...."

Here another aspect of Briefs' criteria for distinguishing strata becomes clear -- its taking subjectivity into account. Semiskilled workers in the U.S. were pretty much the same stratum, in jobs and social standing, as their counterparts in Europe. Yet Briefs says the Europeans were proletarians and the Americans not proletarians. The difference: the Americans had some hopes of escaping their situation, while the Europeans were condemned to their jobs for life. Greater social mobility, educational opportunities, etc. gave American workers the idea that their children might go up the social scale, even if the parents never did. But in Europe the sharper class lines and lack of opportunity made workers feel the pain of proletarian existence very sharply.

3) "... the unskilled. In this country the group is composed of recent immigrants, of colored people, and of the dregs of higher social groups. This section lacks any organization along regular

trade-union lines, which, however, has not prevented it from being at times stirred up by political and radical agitation. This third stratum ... is exposed more than any other group to competition and is incapable therefore of organizing and articulating itself. ... However, sometimes their misery was so great that their impatience found an outlet in riotous and unconsidered acts of violence. The I.W.W. was the great adventure of this group in the United States; similar anarcho-syndicalist reactions have appeared in the history of labor in all industrialized countries."

Summing up this stratification on page 199, Briefs emphasizes that "the organization and articulation of labor in the United States was overwhelmingly the privilege of the upper stratum." This stratum is devoid of class consciousness; yet they are the leading stratum within the American working class. Hence it is, he says, that there has never been a significant socialist movement in the U.S.

Yet even here, Briefs warns, there is danger. The American working class has proletarian "potential." With the closing of the frontier, with the increasing proletarianization of the middle classes, and with capitalist insecurity for workers, there is obvious potential in the U.S. for a hereditary proletarian working class to be formed. Efforts must be made to provide strata

2) and 3) of the working class with a "voice," with organization, with some degree of economic security and some prospects for social mobility (at least for their children). Otherwise the danger of class battles looms ahead.

Near the end of his book Briefs notes recent developments: social-welfare legislation of Roosevelt's New Deal and organizing drives of the CIO. He's enthused about these developments; they may be just what is needed to prevent outbreaks of rebellion and social anarchy.

This shows a basic difference between Briefs' outlook and that of a Marxist. Marxists are enthusiastic about class struggle because they see it as leading to a resolution of contradictions and establishment of a higher social order. Briefs however doesn't consider this possible. He cynically notes that craft union leaders use "class struggle" rhetoric on occasion to fire up workers, and he sees nothing wrong with that since they aren't serious about it. It's fine for union leaders to fight for wages, working conditions, insurance plans, even political rights of their members. This is their rightful activity, and such activity helps integrate them and their followers into the capitalist establishment.

But European-style political parties based on the class struggle only mislead workers into fantasy. They're OK for

building workers' pride in themselves, but not as practical, realistic organizations. Pushing the class struggle to extremes will not resolve the basic contradictions within capitalist society; it will only

a) give rise to hopeless and desperate "plebeian revolts" (Fred's phrase). As seen above, this is the way Briefs characterizes the activity of the IWW.

OR b) result in a Bolshevik takeover -- but this, Briefs argues, is only a sham of a new society. It's basically just state-capitalism. Workers still do not rule; they are oppressed by a bureaucracy.

OR c) result in fascism, as conservative strata unite to quash any more outbreaks.

Hence the most workers can hope for is liberal-labor reform. In a historical section Briefs mentions warmly the rise of Bernstein revisionism within the socialist movement as an inevitable reflection of the new working class, after trade unions and legislative reforms had alleviated many of its proletarian aspects.

SOCIAL CIRCULATION -- PROLETARIANIZATION & DEPROLETARIANIZATION

Aside from the bourgeoisie and proletariat (or working class) Briefs also recognizes the middle class (or classes). He notes that in some countries such as France this includes a large number of small proprietors, many of whom are actually poorer than many workers. It also includes prop-

ertyless commercial and sales personnel. And it includes white collar employees, among whom Briefs includes factory foremen, clerks, bookkeepers, etc. So this is a very diverse "class", and Briefs does not try to separate out the various strata within it. The main thing he's interested in is how proletarians circulate into and out of these middle strata. This is the key to preventing class struggle; social mobility is what has prevented a European-style socialist movement from developing in the U.S. Briefs discusses this in Chapter XI, "The Social Circulation of the Proletariat."

Here Briefs notes two processes going on at once under capitalism: proletarianization and deproletarianization. As capitalism grows and wipes out small producers and petty tradesmen, these middle strata are proletarianized -- they lose their independent status and are forced to accept employment as wage earners. But at the same time, many workers are being deproletarianized; they are leaving the working class or at least losing the more precarious aspects of proletarian existence.

Briefs rejects the myth of "bourgeoisification." He says workers don't actually become bourgeois (at least not masses of them. Some individuals do, in America). They remain in a dependent status in the economic system; but they achieve "equality in civil and political rights" with the bour-

geois, "equality in social standing [?!], and insurance against the dangers and uncertainties of proletarian existence..." (pp. 178-179) Trade union organization is the key to this, combined with workers' participation in political and social groups. The latter, even when it doesn't accomplish anything concrete, at least gives workers the idea that they are participating in society, and this is important (the subjective element, again). The example of one labor aristocrat who makes it into high government office does wonders in pacifying workers.

Briefs analyzes the routes individuals may take to get out of the working class, especially in America. They may get promoted to more highly skilled positions; they may be advanced to foremen ("white collar status"); they may "rise to the level of the petty bourgeoisie ..., proletarian wage earners going over into handicraft, into the saloon and restaurant business, into storekeeping, salesmanship, and the like. Here we have a sort of small social border traffic, which naturally springs up as the petty bourgeois on various levels tend more and more to become proletarian in their manner of living. ... it happens *not infrequently* that the more ambitious and successful proletarians are not only better off financially than their petty-bourgeois neighbors but have actually risen above

them in social esteem." (p. 181)

Briefs sums up by asserting that the working class in general is being uplifted by capitalism: "The process of deproletarianization, which implies that wage-earnerhood loses much or all of its castelike character and that the hardships of the worker's life are removed or at least alleviated, is active in a variety of forms.... The proletariat whose economic and social features were drawn by Marx and Engels ... has, in the old industrialized countries, completely disappeared from view, though it has a sort of counterpart in those countries but recently opened up, which form, so to speak, the border provinces of capitalism. As compared with these it appears that the deproletarianizing process in European countries has gone very far indeed." (pp. 185-186)

There is nothing in this analysis about the elimination or obsolescence of the working class. Briefs recognizes that the historical trend is for the working class to become larger and larger, and more and more important socially and economically. Marx and Engels were right about this. But the working class loses its revolutionary potential, which it had in the early 1800s, by being progressively raised up by capitalism. This isn't just a tendency of late-19th century England or post-World War II United States; Briefs thinks it is inherent in capitalism, at least where workers have a

certain amount of freedom to agitate in trade-union and political activity.

So there are two outlets for preventing the class struggle. One is the social mobility of individuals -- workers rising up into skilled, white collar and petty-bourgeois status. Another is the general raising up of the working class, doing away with proletarian insecurity.

Note that Briefs recognizes the existence of old-style exploitation in the "border provinces" of capitalism. He mentions China and India in this regard. In these countries all the old brutality gets reproduced -- proletarians without any rights at all forced to work very long hours for very little pay; workers hired and fired arbitrarily by their employer; child labor and forced labor; workers without any pensions, health or disability insurance; etc. So Briefs is under no illusions that capitalism in general has become kinder and gentler. But workers in these countries can only follow the lead of the workers in the advanced industrialized countries: organize unions, agitate for social welfare legislation and political rights, and eventually their status will improve.

The interesting thing about Briefs is that he recognizes two processes going on at once. After analyzing deproletarianization, on p. 186 he says:

"But it appears too that the opposite process, that of proletarianization, has gone on at an increasing rate. The wage system has been extended to cover a number of occupations and types of service which it has never touched before. The realms of handicraft, agriculture, commerce, trades, communication, industrial administration, and factory management all have been successfully invaded. Once a purely peripheral form of compensation, the wage has become ... the normal or type form. And the number of individuals engaged in wage work has grown accordingly. From this point of view proletarianization is simply a name for the fact that an ever increasing number of propertyless individuals put their services on the market for sale." (p. 186)

The implication of this last sentence is that proletarianization is nothing bad, that the petty-bourgeois don't end up in oppressed, insecure positions but rather take their place next to up-and-coming proletarians within the corporate managerial hierarchy. Briefs doesn't give any further analysis of proletarianization. But from experience of the 1980s we recognize this as a mass phenomenon, not just of middle-class people putting their labor up for sale as sales and marketing experts, but of "non-proletarian workers" (to use Briefs' terminology) being forced down into proletarian positions. For example, auto workers being laid off and

forced to accept non-union, low-wage, insecure, no-insurance jobs. As well, there's still the question of proletarianized petty-bourgeois; do they all end up in corporate middle strata, as Briefs seems to assume, or do many of them end up in strictly working class positions? Recent news articles have examined the phenomenon of college graduates working as auto workers, postal workers, etc.

Anyway, Briefs goes on to analyze corporate middle strata, sections roughly corresponding to what has been called the technical/managerial stratum. Briefs calls this stratum a "new middle class." It is not a middle class of proprietors, small independent producers and tradesmen. It is a middle class of corporate employees, of people involved in large-scale capitalist industry. They sell their labor for a wage and are propertyless; in this respect they are proletarians. But their pay, status, and type of work set them off from the working-class strata analyzed above.

Briefs raises the question of how exactly to characterize this stratum, saying "... here there would seem to be a clear case of legitimate difference of opinion. When it becomes apparent that the workers have gained access to positions of a managerial nature, shall we say that the workers have risen above their proletarian station? Or is it more logical to

say that the managerial staff has been proletarianized at least in its lower ranks?" (pp. 186-187) Briefs gives two answers on p. 187:

"... One group of thinkers ... holds that the proletarian class has widened its bounds to take in the holders of staff positions in industry.... In Germany this view found institutional expression in the organization known as the *Ausschuss freier Angestelltenverbände*. It reflects the Marxian ideology.... From the relatively low rate of the individual's pay, his lack of independence, and his limited chance for advancement, the conclusion is drawn that these staff members are in fact proletarians. The upholders of this view do not ignore the fact that the members of this group are decidedly non-proletarian in their attitudes and feel themselves distinctly set apart from the ordinary workers. But they explain this aloofness as a hang-over from earlier days when certain bourgeois ideas no longer in keeping with the facts were generally accepted.

"The other answer to the question ... is to the effect that foremen, supervisors, and the rest constitute a class intermediate between bourgeoisie and proletariat; in fact, the assertion is made by some that these form a genuinely bourgeois class, which upholds its own distinctive standards and possesses a function and a dignity which effectively set it

apart from the proletarian wage earner. This view too was embodied in organizations, for example, in the ... *Verband leitender Angestellter* (Association of Leading Business Officers)."

Here Briefs is describing the tension that exists between different sorts of organizations that exist among professional and semiprofessional strata. In the U.S. we have the example of teachers being organized by both the NEA, the professional organization, and the AFT, the AFL-CIO teachers' union. For decades the NEA took care of certain insurance plans and mutual benefit associations, and lobbied legislatures, but it did not collectively bargain or call strikes. After the AFT began to organize teachers as a union, then the NEA changed into a collective bargaining agent. Among nurses as well there is intense competition among organizations -- professional organizations of nurses, unions of hospital workers, and unions of nurses. And I've heard of different sorts of organizations among postal supervisors, executives, and postmasters. Apparently in Germany there were actually trade unions of business executives.

Briefs notes that the first answer to the question -- that corporate middle strata should be classed as proletarian -- becomes absurd if you follow it to the logical extreme and classify everyone on salary in the corporation as proletarian.

This would include the president and CEO! In that case the distinction between bourgeois and proletarian loses any conceptual value. A better idea, Briefs thinks, is to classify corporate officers as bourgeois, but to distinguish these "bourgeoisie of salary and position" from the "bourgeoisie of property" (old-money coupon clippers).

ECONOMIC LIMITS TO DEPROLETARIANIZATION

One of the main methods of deproletarianization is social welfare legislation -- old age and disability pensions, health insurance plans, and so forth. Briefs praises these for their effectiveness in buying off the workers and identifying their interests with the capitalist establishment. But he also notes that they are very expensive. Experience from Europe (especially Germany) indicates that these plans quickly end up costing three-four times as much, per year, as anyone planned. To pay for them requires heavy taxation, which drags down the entire society, creating unemployment and thus doing more harm than good, since unemployed workers end up just as angry at the system as uninsured employed workers. So Briefs advises the establishment to go easy on social insurance and to establish just the minimum necessary.

The key thing, he says, is economic growth. This is the only way to provide workers

with a chance at social mobility, to move up the scale while not killing the economic system with welfare payments and taxation. Briefs sees no alternative to capitalist economics, and he's sympathetic to the argument that social security payments are unproductive (in a capitalist sense). He thinks they're necessary and valuable from a social and political standpoint, but a drag on the economic system. So in the end he remains somewhat pessimistic; on the one hand hopeful that leaders in government and business can come up with right mix of economic and fiscal policy to ensure steady growth and opportunities for advancement; on the other hand worried society may face "plebeian revolts" or worse.<>

[Ben, continued from p. 45]

the good will or resistance to corruption of those in the center, that the **process of all information having to be channeled through a single central point** inevitably introduces **distortions** and limits the ability of constituent elements of the process from **interacting locally**, or "**in parallel**".

-116- I hope that sectarian supporters can consider the fact that Mark's **most strident opposition to "independent, parallel processes"** stems from his **absolute fidelity** to the **principles of organization** (of society and of its proletarian political party) **codified**

under J. V. Stalin. In the Soviet party and in Soviet society all information, all interconnection between disparate process was **in theory channeled through Stalin's brain.**

-117- Such **organizational theories** may have served the needs of survival and development of a very brutal regime in very brutal conditions but they have **no place** in the development of a **communist society** nor in the development of a **proletarian party** in the **modern world.**

-118- This **super-centralized organizational formula for stagnation** in the midst of a **fast moving world** is still adhered to by our sectarian leadership who have yet to give account for how such a concern of **first-rate importance** as was reflected in comrade Ray's 1988 letter to the CC was **deliberately concealed** from the party membership.<>

Correspondence

From the Philippines

August 1, 1994

Dear comrades,

Communist greetings!

Herewith are: 1) our letter for you which we sent by mail to your address in SFBA on the last week of January; 2) our letter to the LL of Sweden asking for assistance; 3) our statement expressing unity with the delegates to the conference on East Timor held here recently; 4) our statement on the VAT issue here; and 5) a series of leaflets distributed by the Asia Brewery Inc. (ABI) workers in the course of their recent struggle.

With regards to developments in the Philippines since the anti-bases days, please read our letter to MLLS. Also, if you have some good relations with them, do advocate for us. We started this present year by adding a new dimension to our struggle. We bannered up such slogan as "Build the revolutionary movement on a firmer foundation in a more systematic way!" By this slogan, we are stressing conscious efforts to establish the PRK in the vital industrial sector. And so, inspired by such slogan, we are beginning to invade the realm that has been occupied or controlled by the big trade union centers like the TUCP, FFW,

KMU and others. Indeed, this new dimension has meant not just working within reactionary or reformist trade unions but also deep penetration work.

The new dimension is, perhaps, a most important lesson we have learned from the many years of trade union work since the early 1980's. No doubt, we have always the determination to build a genuine working class movement and so, since the start, we have merged ourselves among the workers and build legal organizations and the underground revolutionary movement. But we were not free from some spontaneity. For we lacked the conscious efforts to reach out to the most important industrial sector. We organized only those which we could reach and those who had reached us for some assistance. And, consequently, we were organizing only the relatively smaller factories. Maybe, if we count what we have so far organized, the total number of unions could be between 40 and 50. But, because such were not very vital to the economy, capitalist owners just closed down such factories and indirectly dismantled our unions one by one.

The year before and last year, the two bulwarks of our trade union movement struck. Each had more or less 300 workers. After one year of strike, the first one could no

longer prevent the majority of the workers from taking the option to accept the capitalist offer of money and resignation. And so, after more than two years of strike, only 17 workers were left to persist in their struggle. Recently, the 17 celebrated a victory with the management giving up the fight, recognizing the union, paying what were due to them, and welcoming them back into the reopening and reoperation of the factory.

The second one is still on strike. Last June, they staged a program to celebrate the first anniversary of their strike. We could not prevent the disintegration of the union as some members went home to their respective provinces with their families and others found jobs in other workplaces far from the factory site. Only a handful could be seen in the picket line.

It was our assessment of our experience in trade union organizing that led us to new dimension in trade union work...[new funding, Oleg] In April 1994, a 5-person Committee on Industrial Organizing was formed and deployed to take the lead in implementing this dimension. And, after three months, it has started to bear fruits.

A most prominent result is the birth of an independent workers' union in the Asia Brewery Inc. in Cabuyao, Laguna. ABI is know to be the

present challenge to the beer monopoly of San Miguel Corporation. It is owned by one of the richest names in the Philippines, Lucio Tan, who now owns also the Philippine Airlines. ABI has a workforce of 900 regular workers and 300 casual workers.

Prior to June-July 1994, the reigning union was a local affiliate of the National Federation of Labor Unions (NAFLU), the federation founded by the late Felixberto Olalia who in 1980 led the founding of the Kilusan Mayo Uno (KMU). With the splitting of the KMU into three factions, the local affiliate fell into the hands of the NAFLU-National Confederation of Labor of the Philippines (NCLP), one of the KMU's three factions.

But the majority of the workers could no longer swallow not only the NAFLU-KMU brand of opportunist leadership but also that of the NAFLU-NCLP. Our contacts among the workers then led the majority in a local election, put down such leadership, and established their own leadership. Over such development, the two KMU factions fought against each other by words and threats, each one thinking that the other was behind the new leadership.

Meanwhile, the new leadership and union have proved themselves to be truly those of the workers by way of the struggle they put up against the capitalist owner and the federation's opportunist leaders

these past three months. They staged a demonstration, launched a strike, and battled the security guards and armed stooges of Lucio Tan. And they have won small victories and last July they announced to all the workers in and out of ABI that theirs is an independent workers' union. Until now, the factions continue to suspect each other as secretly behind the new development. This only shows how deep we have taken roots among the workers in ABI.

We are operating not only within ABI but also within other relatively big factories where unions belong to either the TUCP, FFW or KMU. But, in these factories, we are yet in the beginning stage.

We thus hope and strive to transform this development into a new trend: a trend of conversion or bolshevization of reactionary and reformist trade unions. Indeed, we pledge to build the PRK on the firmer foundation of the vital industries in a more systematic way. For such is the road to the establishment of the proletarian movement upon the unshakable foundation of the industrial proletariat and the establishment of the leadership of the proletariat in the revolution. Of course, we do not underestimate all the other sectors of the toiling masses. We are, in fact, intensifying also our work among the workers in the smaller factories, among the urban poor, peasants, fishermen, etc. and among the toiling women, youth and children.

Lastly, we would like to learn about your thoughts on the following issues: Harkin's Bill (anti-child labor), Final Act of the Uruguay Round, and others you would like to share with us.

LONG LIVE MARXISM-LENINISM! UNDER THE BANNER OF GENUINE MARXISM-LENINISM, THE WORLD PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION WILL RISE AGAIN TO CONTINUE HISTORY AND REALIZE ITS END: COMMUNISM!

B...

Central Committee-KPRP

=====
January 28, 1994

Dear comrades,

Fraternal greetings!

At first we were saddened by the news that reached us from a friend who was a WA subscriber. No sooner we received two copies of WA's final issue and of the Chicago Branch's statement. Thistime, we have done away with initial reaction.

MLP was great and had been an inspiration, but its dissolution as such was your collective decision [and] must be the best that can happen to it given the prevailing circumstances.

At our special meeting last January 24, we discussed your party's dissolution, among others, and agreed that

its end was not at all regrettable. We related your experience to those of the first communists led by Marx and Engels. They formally dissolved the Communist League in 1852 and the First International in 1876. During each dissolution meeting or congress, the staunch communists were always mindful of the fact that they were not putting off the fire of the struggle for communism. In fact, each decision was based on their concrete assessment that it was just the best that can be done having on top of every one's mind the class struggle and communist movement in the particular circumstances.

The dissolution of the Communist League in 1852 saved the first generation of genuine communists from being exterminated by the bourgeois states then threatened to the bone by the haunting specter of communism and responsibly carrying over the first ever anti-communist campaign of terror. Also the dissolution of the First International in 1872 or 1876 did much to preserve the gains of Marxism in the face of most severe bourgeois persecution and against the anarchists who could not accept their defeat and were seeking to use the international machinery of the organization to spread themselves and their ideology in several countries and undermine the Marxist ideological victory.

We also made reference to the history of the Communist Party of the Philippines. When

the CPP was founded in 1930, it was a genuine party of the Filipino workers who were then greatly inspired by the 1917 October Revolution and the Leninist Communist International. And we concluded that it would have been better had the first Filipino communists formally dissolved the party at that time when the new policy of the Seventh World Congress of the CI was imposed upon them. And the Philippine history would have been a different one as the revisionists would not have the advantage of using not only the name but also the machinery of the organization for the spread of revisionism in the mass movement. Dissolution indeed would have been the best that could happen to the first CPP. Thus, without the benefit of dissolution history has it that the seeming peaceful continuation of the CPP only served as a cover for the reality of the collapse of the first proletarian party and the establishment in its stead of the revisionist merger party in 1938 which has been in the service of the bourgeoisie up to the present and whose tendency towards open reformism and rejection of people's war during the last half of the 1950s and throughout the 1960s led to a split and eventually the Maoist "reestablishment" of the CPP in 1968.

Thus, while we highly regard your MLP, we also have a high regard for your collective decision. We learned a lot from MLP, we will also learn some from

with us your documents. We believe that the correct ideas that MLP taught will soon give rise to a new, more advanced and more determined organization. Long live the genuine worker communists in the heartland of US imperialism! You can never allow a minute without class struggle and the struggle for communism!

You or those among you who are continuing the great historical mission, we will always be in solidarity with you. But we can only say words, express feelings and write this note. But there is something more. Yes, everything we do (excluding the wrong ones) is done not only for the Filipino toiling masses but also for all the proletarians including our American brethren in all lands. Long live the world proletarian revolution!

On our part, we are set to establish the proletarian movement on a firmer foundation in a more systematic way. Through legal work, combination of legal and illegal work, institutional work and using [other] funds ..., and more emphatic ideological development work, we have established ourselves in additional two cities and five municipalities in Metro Manila. When Comrades Peter and Miguel visited us, we were only in a handful of communities in Q....., C....., P..... and T....., Now, we have activists and contacts also in several communities in M....., X....., Y....., Z....., A....., and B....

Through work in reactionary institutions and trade unions, we are preparing to penetrate all the rest of the metropolitan cities and municipalities. Certain social democrats and revisionists have been trying to expose us so that we be denied the current financial and institutional opportunities for our revolutionary work and expansion, but we have been able to defend ourselves.

Meanwhile, we are probably most benefited by the collapse of revisionism and the current in-fighting among the Maoists here in our country. More and more mass activists and their contacts have opened themselves to working with us and participating in our ideological and political studies. In fact, a few who came from the ranks of Maoist party and people's army are now among us. No doubt, we are always mindful of class independence and the proletarian character of our organization. And we are very strict when it comes to elements belonging to the petty bourgeoisie and upper classes. We deal with them as allies and encourage them to serve the proletariat and the toilers.

We have been mindful of the task of preparing ourselves for the realization of a genuine Marxist-Leninist party. Thus, throughout this year, we shall be more seriously involved in carrying out such tasks as researching and documenting the industrial situation, prioritizing the more important industries, and establishing the movement among the proletarians in

these industries as we continue to go down deep and expand among the urban poor in the metropolis and among the rural poor in a number of provinces and continually deepen and expand our understanding of Marxism-Leninism.

We have no financial and material means, especially now that our trade union work suffers in view of the closure of the smaller factories where we did our organizing and mounted our strikes

Long live the class struggle of the proletariat and other toilers in the USA, the Philippines and throughout the world! Long live Marxism-Leninism! Communism will triumph! For the advance and victory of the world proletarian revolution,

B.....,

Central Committee-KPRP

[letter to Swedish MLL]

June 21, 1994

Dear Comrades,

Communist greetings!

Many things have happened here since the series of published articles concerning the proletarian revolutionary movement in the country in MLP's Workers' Advocate.

In September 1991, an extension of the "people pow-

er revolution", the quite strong pressure coming from the people urged the Philippine Senate to end the US-Philippine Military Bases Agreement. We were, of course, among the most militant fighters in the general anti-imperialist anti-bases movement. In fact, we were the ones who marched through 12 kilometers amidst heavy rain on the very day when the Senate was then to declare the end of the bases agreement.

Certainly, US imperialism did not just withdraw its bases. Withdrawal was in fact in response to its internal problems brought about by economic recession. Moreover, it was calculated to hasten the collapse of Maoist revisionism and contribute to the stabilization of the newly-restored democracy in the country. For the Filipino Maoists, the US bases summarized US imperialist domination of the country and even the root of the poverty of the Filipino masses. Maoist activists then came to the point of bannerizing such slogan as "US bases, the root of poverty!" Thus, with the bases withdrawal, the entire national democratic movement was put in disarray and the tendency to split into factions was then hastened.

Indeed, though vehemently opposed by the Aquino regime and Ramos, as it was the result of an act by the then opposition-dominated Senate, the bases withdrawal prettified the newly-restored democracy, won more popular support for such democracy and hastened

the erosion of similar support for the Maoist movement. In 1992, such people's support for democracy expressed itself in the election of Ramos and continuation of Aquino's policies through the Ramos regime. And, with such support, under the Ramos regime, a relatively more stable economic and political situation has been in place throughout the country.

Stability has been mainly due to the absence of destabilizing factors which were played before by the three anti-government forces such as the military putschists, Muslim secessionists and especially Maoist revisionists. In fact, the economic situation has never improved and it is quite fragile. A credible movement, credible not only in terms of line but also in terms of size and mass support, can certainly challenge the government and drive it crazy. But such is no longer existing and such could no longer come from the discredited revisionists or any of their factions. It can only come from a revolutionary movement that enjoy a substantial support from the masses.

Maoist revisionism has collapsed. The revolutionary movement that many people throughout the world respected, supported and expected a victory in a matter of time has broken into several factions fighting each other. In its efforts to stick to Maoism, the official CPP-NPA-NDF led by Jose Maria Sison who has been living in the Netherlands

has been reduced to less than a third of the previous whole. Bigger groups in Metro Manila and in Central and Southern Philippines declared their autonomy from Sison's leadership; however, the general direction of these groups is rightist, meaning towards collaboration with the social democrats, conservative unions and even Ramos regime.

To our mind, the relatively more progressive among them are still the Maoists led by Sison, but they have substantially lost their credibility especially among the masses and they have been embroiled in quite intense and even physical struggles with the other factions. And the more they respond to the challenge posed by their opponents in their movement, the more they isolate themselves and lose other members. On the other hand, the other factions are busy allying themselves with other political forces such as the popular democrats, social democrats, and even reactionary groups in order to mount a broad mass movement and thereby project a greater force for social reforms. But it seems they can no longer fool any one into believing that they are for revolution.

Meanwhile, the proletarian revolutionary movement has not been adversely affected by the ongoing collapse of revisionism. To some considerable extent, we have in fact been benefited by the events. A growing number of tested revolutionaries from the ranks of the revisionists are going over

to our side. They are worker, urban poor and peasant activists; a number of them are now members of our organization. But our capability to link up with the masses in many areas including those who are now in search for a real revolutionary force is certainly very limited.

Three years ago, we could not move outside of our traditional areas ... [Now] we have been able to enter many cities and municipalities ..., establish contacts in these new places, organize core groups, and begin to expand the proletarian movement.

The results have been very encouraging, for we have expanded our ranks and areas of operations And we have begun deploying full-time organizers If ... [funding] continues, we shall be establishing the movement in [other areas]. But, now, it seems we are on the way to some hard times [appeal for help in funding]

Workers in all countries, unite! Long live the world proletarian revolutionary! March towards the end of capitalism and the victory of world socialism! Communism: the future of mankind!

Bon Angelis,

Central Committee--KPRP

Union of the Proletarian Revolutionaries of the Philippines

Announcing *Red-Orange*:

A Marxist Triquarterly of Theory, Politics & the Everyday

The inaugural issue of *Red Orange* will be published in the spring of 1995. *Red Orange* will contribute to the positive development of revolutionary Marxist knowledge of contemporary capitalist economics, politics, society, and culture. *Red Orange* will include critical, theoretical, and pedagogical articles of sustained length, as well as a dossier of briefer writings which deal with developments in popular consciousness and mass culture.

Red Orange will argue for the necessary theoretical and political priority of such concepts as class, class consciousness, history, materiality, mode of production, forces and relations of production, labor, proletariat, revolution, socialism, communism, dialectics, ideology, theory, and critique.

The first issue of *Red Orange* will begin to investigate the broad topic of "*Late Capitalism at the Fin-de-Siecle*. This focus will continue throughout the first year as the second and third issues of *Red Orange* will (tentatively) focus upon the specific topics of market and commodity culture (issue two), and globality, globalism, and global postality (issue three) in *fin-de-siecle* late capitalism. We invite submissions for this first, and for the subsequent second and third issues of *Red Orange* that focus on the development of revolutionary Marxist critical theory of, and intellectual-pedagogical intervention within, various institutions, discourses, practices, and social relations of *fin-de-siecle* late capitalism. We invite submissions from across the full range of traditional academic-intellectual "disciplines." We are also particularly interested in articles

which will address the related question -- in the course of their investigation of *fin-de-siecle* late capitalist economics, politics, society, and culture -- of How and Why, on the Advent of the Twenty-First Century, the Revolutionary Socialist Transformation of Capitalism into Communism is - Still - Possible and - Still - Necessary.

Text and inquiries can be addressed to *Red Orange*, P.O. Box 1055, Tempe, AZ 85280-1055.

They can also be sent electronically by mail (to: rcymbala@mailbox.syr.edu) or by file transfer (into directory: /upload on the Institute for Global communication's computer: igc.apc.org).

Contact the managing editor after uploading file(s) or if assistance is needed). Robert A. Nowlan, Chief Ed.; Robert J. Cymbala, Managing Ed.<>

From Baba to Tovarishch,

The Bolsheviks and Women's Emancipation

Published by the Chicago Worker's Voice

Price: \$15.00 (including shipping)

-Now Available-

Workplace and Community Struggles

LOS ANGELES

Fighting against Prop. 187 WHICH WAY FORWARD?

The mammoth 100,000 strong march against anti-immigrant scapegoating and the massive walk-outs and rallies by students over the last two months heralds the beginning of a new mass social movement based on the workers and students. For this movement to gain strength and win bigger victories for the oppressed, the momentum must be continued.

New forces are coming into political motion and this new movement is already frightening the rich ruling class. The effectiveness of our fight is shown by the fact that both conservative and liberal establishment figures from former Secretary of Education William Bennett, former HUD secretary Jack Kemp to Supervisor Gloria Molina, Senator Dianne Feinstein and Councilman Richard Alatorre are all being shot into the situation telling the students and workers to 'chill out' and leave the resolution of prop. 187 to their judges and lawyers, the "legal system".

Now it should be noted that these so-called "friends of immigrants" came forward only in response to the mass protest actions. This is because their worst nightmare is an independent movement that has the potential to ignite

peoples' democratic impulses, their strivings for political and economic empowerment through collective organizing and struggle.

As the great anti-slavery abolitionist leader Frederick Douglass taught, "Without struggle there is not progress. Power never conceded anything without a demand!"

Non-compliance with prop. 187!

No cooperation with police state measures like 187!

Education, healthcare and the right to work are human rights!

Full human rights for all immigrants!

Leaflet by *LA Workers' Voice*--Box 57483, Los Angeles, CA 90057 <>

DETROIT

The following text was part of an announcement posted and distributed at various postal installations in Detroit calling for a picket on the 3rd anniversary of the tragedy at the Royal Oak, MI post office. The initiator of the rally was a steward at that post office with little or no support from other union locals in the area. The flyer was produced by the Detroit ML Study Group. The picket was to be held on November 14.

Stop management abuse! Fire tyrant bosses!

Postal workers at the Royal Oak post office and their supporters in other facilities are holding an informational picket to expose the continued abuse of postal workers by management. It was management harassment of employees that led to the tragic massacres at both Royal Oak and Dearborn. Since then, upper management has orchestrated a slick public relations campaign to convince the world that they are going to create a worker-friendly atmosphere in the post office. But actions speak louder than words. And the facts are that upper management has still not taken any significant action against those shop floor bosses who mistreat the employees. As for the bosses at Royal Oak and Dearborn, they have literally gotten away with murder! Despite their long and well-documented abuse of the workers, they have mainly just been transferred somewhere else where they will continue to wreak havoc. Some even continue to work in the same facility. And in the rare instance where a local manager was removed, he was not fired, but given a "golden parachute" retirement.

Why is it that top postal officials have failed to curb the abusive behavior of their

underlings? Certainly they are not unaware of the situation. Certainly they have the power to fire tyrant-managers. Nor is it mainly a question of the individual personality traits of various managers. (Postal workers are all too familiar with "friendly co-workers" who are promoted to management positions and then become monsters, for example.) The main reason for abusing employees is to get them to accept overwork, understaffing and speedup. Despite its "non-profit" status, the USPS is always focused on the "bottom line". Managers and supervisors who squeeze the workers the hardest are rewarded with bonuses and promotions. So long as budget targets are met, it does not matter if workers get trampled in the process. In other words, the USPS management has the same basic attitude toward the workers as the typical profit-hungry capitalist business.

Postal workers cannot wait for management to voluntarily reform itself. But who will bring change? Years of Congressional investigations haven't. And what of the union leaderships? When the Royal Oak steward appealed for their solidarity behind the November 14 picket, he was given the cold shoulder by most union officials. This is the typical reaction of the union leaderships to any effort by the rank-and-file to mobilize themselves. Meanwhile, the labor-management cooperation policy of the union leaders has

paved the way for management's productivity drive.

If real change is to come about, it is up to the rank-and-file workers to bring it about. Postal workers must organize their own protest actions, *despite* the union leaders. Militant postal workers must develop their own independent networks, meetings, and leaflets. Collective mass action is needed to fight management abuse and the productivity drive that lies behind it!

Leaflet produced by postal worker supporters of the Detroit Marxist-Leninist Study Group, PO Box 1261 Detroit, MI 48213-0261<>

Below are the articles from our latest leaflet, the **Detroit Workers' Voice**, #2, Dec. 3, 1994:

Arbitration will not save postal workers: Organize against management's rotten contract demands!

The USPS and the unions have sent the postal contract to arbitration. Little information has been released to date. But to get an idea of what management is after, check out the proposal they made on the APWU and NALC contracts. Management is proposing cuts in real wages, elimination of COLA, cutting sick leave in half and slashing annual leave. They refuse to convert all the TEs to career

employees, but want to continue the "temporary" TE system based on substandard wages, benefits and rights. They want new career employees to start off with wages 10% below present starting wages. And these are just some of the concessions management wants.

But no matter how outrageous management's demands are, the trade union misleaders refuse to lift a finger against them. By sending the contract to arbitration, these sellouts have taken away even the right to vote on contracts. They don't care about the opinion of the postal workers, but they place their trust in high-priced, pro-management arbitrators to decide our fate. They hope we will forget that arbitration of issues from the last contract led to such disasters as the substandard wages for TEs and assaults on our health care benefits. For the union sellouts, the important thing is not a good contract, but trying to shift the blame for caving in to management from themselves to the arbitrators. After all, campaigns against past sellout contracts have helped the rank and file develop their own voice and organize ties between militant workers. The last thing the union bureaucrats want to see is an enlightened and mobilized rank and file.

The union bureaucrats pretend workers can defend themselves without struggle. But look what is happening. Across the country, the capitalist corporations are cutting

wages, eliminating benefits, slashing the workforce, replacing full-time workers with "cheap" temporary labor, and increasing workloads. Meanwhile, the Clinton government has frozen federal workers' pay. Postal management is no different. They too are out for blood. They too want to drive the conditions of "their" workers into the ground.

Postal workers must prepare for battle. But the union leaders whine that struggle is impossible because there is no right to strike. According to them, all you can do is throw yourself on the mercy of an arbitrator. Baloney. Having the right to strike would be of great assistance. But what the union officials fail to mention is that both winning the right to strike and fighting management's contract concessions requires collective mass action of the rank and file. Now the idea of struggle undoubtedly frightens the union

union officials but that hardly makes it impossible. All sorts of activities can be carried out to help organize the workers for struggle, whether or not the capitalist authorities deem them acceptable or not. As for strikes, there was no right to strike in 1970 either, but a powerful national strike was organized by militant workers anyway. And in 1978, there were wildcat strikes in several cities.

The lesson is not that struggle is impossible but that for the workers to develop their ability to struggle, they must not wait on the union leaders to do something. The rank and file must get organized independently of the sellout union leadership. The arbitrator is now considering the contract. The more the rank and file protests management's demands, the more pressure there will be on management and the arbitrator

to back down from their outrageous anti-worker proposals. And no matter what the outcome of the contract struggle, organizing against the rotten provisions of the contract will not be wasted. It will put us in a better position to continue to struggle against rotten contract provisions and other management attacks.

There is plenty that can be done. Help circulate this leaflet. (Feel free to xerox it.) Write your own protest leaflets. Hold discussions with your coworkers on ways to protest against a concessions contract. Petitions, pickets, work-to-rule slowdowns, and protest meetings are some forms of action that can be considered to further mobilize the collective might of the rank and file. If the workers are not to be chewed up by management, we must begin to take matters into our own hands.<>

Debate on Dissolving the MLP

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Editorial Guide to the Sixth Issue of the *CWV Theoretical Journal*

This issue of Chicago Workers' Voice Theoretical Journal continues the debate on issues that led to the demise of the Marxist-Leninist Party, USA.

On the **nature of imperialism**, we begin with an article on **Mexico**, an important "third world" country which our opponents have used as an example to support their ideas. For example, that, supposedly, political domination by US imperialism is a thing of the past, that rich and poor can get rich together under capitalism. Now Mexico is in the grip of a serious fiscal crisis. Frank's article highlights the reasons why we still hate capitalism and why our class must replace it with socialism, no matter what apologies for exploitation our ex-comrades can conjure.

Please note that the next issue of CWVTJ will continue our coverage of Mexico including some topics of controversy within the ranks of our own supporters. In CWVTJ #5 we carried an announcement that El Machete, a left-wing Mexican newspaper was available through CWV. This ad was not meant as an endorsement of El Machete as a Marxist-Leninist organization.

We note that several supporters of the CWV TJ strongly oppose any endorsement of El Machete and disagree with Oleg's announcement in the last issue. Joseph Green has written his concerns on this and Oleg has replied. This is being discussed among supporters of the CWV TJ. The disagreements include the relative merits or demerits of printing an announce-

ment for a newspaper which comes out of a different trend and experience than ours, assessment of what the trend El Machete represents, assessment of the Zapatista revolt and other issues. The CWV TJ will carry materials on this discussion in the next issue.

India's economy is reviewed by an article we reprint from the Revolutionary Proletarian Platform group. RPP has reprinted an article from CWVTJ, "Cartels and the Striving for Domination by Monopolies" by Mark (CWVTJ #3). It appears that this organization has some similar concerns to ours. And we reprint this article as part of continuing the discussion on what the present features of the world economy mean for the proletarian movement.

Several articles continue the debate on **Palestine**. While Jason argues that we must not only bow to political reality but recognize its permanence, Mark, Neil and Tim argue for overthrowing Zionism. Updating their arguments with recent developments in Palestine, they puncture the particularities of Jason's economic and political schema.

Two articles discuss issues of **organizing the trend around CWVTJ**. Joseph's "A year Since the Collapse of the MLP" summarized much of what

we've done so far and some of the larger issues we face in our work. Neil comments on the importance of ideology during the current right-wing onslaught.

The **nature of capitalism** is debated in articles by Ben and Joseph. Note that Ben's article on p. 39 is an excerpt. We are only printing only one section of a long email message, Seattle #72, dated 12/24/94. Ben wrote it in response to Mark's message, Detroit #69 which has not been published. Joseph's "Left-Wing Neo-conservatives" serves as a reply to Ben and more. Joseph attacks a growing problem in the left, bowing to the pressure of the conservative offensive.

More material on **the nature of the working class** appears with Pete's book review of Gustav Brief's 1937 tome, The Proletariat: A challenge to Western Civilization. The astute reader will see many similarities between Briefs and more contemporary "experts" of class analysis, both prominent and inconsequential, including our own ex-comrade Joe (Boston). He is certainly wrong, but Gustav at least recognized that we workers are a challenge to capitalism.

Correspondence from the KPRP of the Philippines explains some of their situation and in-

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ed. guide, continued
cludes a letter they sent to the Swedish group Marxist-Leninist League.

We are also printing a letter from a journal called Red Orange which announces that it will begin publication this spring and invites submissions.

continued next page

A new section titled **Workplace and Community Struggles** will endeavor to supply our readers with samples of the local leaflets produced by supporters of CWVTJ. Los Angeles provides a fine agitation against the anti-immigrant Proposition 187. Postal workers in

Detroit contributed two articles, one against the Postal Service's rotten contract demands, the other against (how rare) tyrant bosses.

Well, that's what we think of this issue. You read it and see for yourself. Then please let us know what you think.

Marxist-Leninist Bookstore Closed Mail Order Service Still Available

Because of difficulties in staffing the bookstore we have closed our store front location. All of the books and periodicals which were available at the bookstore are still available through the mail. This includes--

***The Chicago Workers' Voice, La Voz Obrera de Chicago, and The Chicago Workers' Voice Theoretical Journal**

***Our recently published book, From Baba to Tovarishch, The Bolshevik Revolution and Soviet Women's Struggle for Liberation**

***Struggle magazine, (see ad elsewhere in this issue for information on how to obtain this direct from the publisher)**

***A wide variety of the classic works of Marx, Engels and Lenin in English and Spanish. We don't have a complete and up-to-date listing of all the works we have, but basically we have or can get you the text of any work you want by these founders of the science of Marxism-Leninism.**

***Various left wing publications that we receive from foreign countries, such as,**

Politica Operaria (from Portugal, in Portuguese), *El Machete* (from Mexico, in Spanish), *Che Fare* (from Italy, in Italian), *Proletarian Emancipation* (from India, in English), *Workers' Voice* (from New Zealand, in English), *People's Star* (from Japan, in English), and *Rote Fahne* (from Germany, in German)

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