



Discussion Bulletin

Published by
SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY
14 Charles Lane, New York, N. Y. 10014

Vol. 31, No. 2
April 1973

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THE MARXIST THEORY OF HUMAN ACTIVITY: MEDIATION THEORY OR HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

by Jan Garrett,
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The following is the first of a couple articles I am submitting that are critical of the quasi-official philosopher of the SWP, George Novack. Why "quasi-official"? The party allegedly does not have an official line on such questions. But the personnel of differing groups in the International also appear to be at odds on philosophy; and comrades lacking knowledge in this area tend to follow their leaders. As a result, I have found that it is apparently now impossible for a lowly rank-and-filer of a mere decade of experience in American Trotskyism to have a book review published in the magazine touching gently on these questions.

It was about five years ago that passages in the works of Antonio Gramsci and Ernest Mandel caused me to begin to reconsider Novack's version of Marxist philosophy (Marx as interpreted by Engels as interpreted by Plekhanov as interpreted by the younger Lenin and by Trotsky, as interpreted by John G. Wright as interpreted by Novack).

But my studies really got under way when I read Georg Lukacs' much denounced book of 1923, *History and Class Consciousness*. Novack knew this, at least partly, when he wrote his review of Lukacs' book; I gave him one more small reason to try to inoculate English-speaking readers against Lukacs' book.

While Lukacs often raised the right questions against Plekhanovite philosophy, his answers were not always adequate. So I am not going to defend Lukacs against Novack; the French comrade did that, fairly well. I am going to try to discuss some problems on their own merits.

The method the party generally follows is closer to what I call the mediational method than it is to what Novack calls our method. This has caused more confusion than is realized. It is the subject of the investigation which follows.

A word about terms. I use the word "ideational" to refer to matters pertaining to processes of consciousness. *Ideation* is thinking seen as an activity, which it is. I use this term rather than "ideological," "ideal" or "intellectual," because these words have other meanings which detract from my point.

I. The theory of mediation

One possible view of the relation between ideas and human actions is what I shall call the mediation theory. Ideas mediate, interact with, or stand between, human beings and the goals of their activity, and between the humans themselves involved in common endeavors.

Marx held such a theory. He felt that humans produce ideas to solve problems with which they spontaneously choose to deal. This choice is, of course, weighted in the direction of a certain range of interactions between the human being and his/her more or less immediate environment. The goal of history—of real people in history—has been to remove this weight from our free choice.

In this theory, goal-directed and creative activity are essential. You cannot "reduce" human activity to mechan-

ical ("efficient") causes. Nor can you "reduce" ideas to objects in the external world of which they are alleged to be weak "copies" or reflections.

This approach presupposes that there is a human nature, one which in fact impels each one of us towards greater unity between ourselves and the world-about-us. Distinctions, separation and objectification can only be temporarily justified by the need to recombine on a more complex and harmonious level.

This also presupposes a preideational, preintellectual level of human existence, which the human species partly shares with prehuman species. The tendency to merge with, relate to, or superimpose oneself on, "otherness" is a biological (ecological), genetic, sexual and emotional impulse as well as an ideational, cultural, linguistic and productive force. However, the main thrust of the mediation theory does concern the latter, purely human areas of experience.

The basic matrix of the mediation theory may be outlined thus:

A single human must have the idea of the goal of his/her activity before he/she undertakes it. A man will have the idea of a house before he builds it. He posits the house-idea and then seeks practical means to realize it through labor.

An even more definite idea is needed if more than one person is to cooperate on the project. At this point you have already the rudiments of language. The idea has already become social.

If a third or fourth person is to participate in the project, that person enters the matrix of idea, goal, language and society as a newcomer. To a certain extent, he/she is presented with a *fait accompli*. He/she has to adopt what has already been agreed on; at least he must reckon with the preestablished idea if he/she wishes to propose changes.

Such is the relation of an individual human to an institution—though of course the institution is more firmly implanted when it is preestablished in the minds of very large numbers of people. The will and desires of a newcomer may then appear almost negligible in a broad historical sense. He/she will be "entirely" determined by the institution, whatever be his/her original inclinations.

Institutions are conservative in the sense that weighty reasons must be given to force changes in them. Insofar as individuals see themselves purely as *isolated* individuals in relation to an institution, it stands apart from them and limits their free activity.

When an institution has more enemies than friends, or is under attack by the great majority, then it is possible to replace it. The dialectic of history consists in this, that an outdated institution tends to generate its own enemies.

II. The theory of alienation

The theory of alienation builds directly upon the basic matrix of human beings, labor, ideas, language, social institutions and society we have outlined above. It may be treated as the most important corollary of the mediation

theory.

To advance to this corollary, however, we must lay stress upon the problem of consciously and socially comprehending a real process which grows in size and complexity and is spread out over a long period of time. This was already implicit in the case of the entry of an individual, e.g., a young adult, into a social institution long established by tradition.

To the extent that the relationship between the need that gave rise to the institution and the institution itself are shrouded in the misty past, to the extent that the institutions of a society are not before the minds of all as being open to question, to debate, such a newcomer will be helpless to exercise his or her will in determining the character of the society.

Thus, the Sumerian specialists in irrigation planning and control elevated themselves over the centuries into an all-powerful priesthood, presenting the canal-digging work of several generations of ancestors of the people themselves as the work of the gods who "divided the land from the waters."

Thus, the controlled experiment technique is elevated into an almost religious rite by people who forget its original purposes and limitations and today feel justified in casting aspersions on social sciences which cannot be fit into a technique designed for natural science.

What we have been describing is intellectual or ideational alienation.

A second form of alienation is political alienation. This can occur most easily in backward but large-scale societies. To the extent that the conditions under which the smaller communities delegated their powers become distant in space and time, political leadership became external and alien. This was especially true in the first civilizations, where illiteracy of the masses and slow means of communication lent uncertainty to memory.

A third form of alienation, the economic, proceeds both from political alienation and from a process internal to the social labor process itself. In the first case, political monopoly obviously creates conditions for the amassing of wealth in the hands of a privileged few. In the second case, more complex as well as more interesting to students of Marxist economic theory, the growing intercommunal division of labor that arose with the birth of commodity-exchange was not matched by a simultaneous increase in social comprehension of what was actually happening, much less the supracommunal will to regulate the process in such a way that it would not react negatively upon the peoples involved.

An example of this is the African slave trade between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. Whole African civilizations sprung up around the enslavement of other African peoples for sale to the Europeans. This trade in turn strengthened the European powers to the point where they could directly subjugate all African peoples.

Economic alienation, of course, has many special sub-forms, including the familiar forms of slave-labor, serf labor and wage-labor. It is beyond the scope of this paper to attempt to show how they evolved out of the general form of economic alienation discussed here. I limit myself to the assertion of the hypothesis that they in fact did.

III. Historical materialism

The mediation theory described in part I is expressed in many places in the work of Marx, most notably *Capital* and the 1844 *Parisian Manuscripts*, but it exists in a sort of tension with an alternate theory, commonly known as

historical materialism.

Some people are inclined to *define* historical materialism as the underlying social methodology used by Marx, assuming that he used only one method. But this is not the case.

What has been immortalized by Engels and the theoreticians of the Second and Third Internationals as historical materialist method tends to be exclusive of mediation theory for the most part. Even when Marx discusses method in his own writings, his statements in the direction of mediation theory are often distorted by the pressure of such a nonmediational approach, even though his most insightful studies are based on mediation theory.

I shall argue that only if historical materialism is taken as a loose popularization of the mediation theory—and not as the essential basis of Marx's theory—can these two elements of his thought be reconciled for us. Those who attempt to defend historical materialism to the exclusion of mediation theory, to root Marxism in the former rather than in the latter, must bring themselves face to face with insoluble sociological and political problems.

Historical materialism is usually presented as a multi-level determinism. George Novack, if my sources are not mistaken, once diagrammed it as a layered pyramid, natural environment forming the bottom layer, followed by "biological man," then the productive forces, the social-economic relations, the mode of production, law, science, art and finally religion and philosophy at the top, in that order.

The lower levels or "base" exercises causality toward the upper levels or "superstructure," according to this view. Although the superstructure in turn influences the base, bottom-up determinism "ultimately" (whatever that means) holds sway.

However, an event on an upper level can be triggered by an event on any of the lower levels.

It in fact turns out that such a model still leaves to the scientist the problem of deciding which "level" contributed greater causation—and in what ways—to the event being discussed. If "historical materialism" is applied seriously, it invariably dissolves into the mediational method described earlier. Or it may dissolve into multifactor analysis, with perhaps a still healthy emphasis on social-economic relations.

We can have no objection, at least to the former—the truth is the concrete totality. But what is wrong is that historical materialism masquerades, at least initially, as an "ultimately" one-directional determinism.

As a result, when historical materialism is seen as *the* method, the tendency is to "reduce" activity at the "super-structural" level to activity at the "base," to flatten out Marxism into economic determinism.

The mediation theory has shown how institutions exercise a limiting effect on individual activity, without reducing ideas to institutions. It also has shown how ideas arise to meet the needs of social interaction, and how both social interaction and ideas relate to the labor process. Labor, society, ideation—these are all human needs. (Insofar as partial economic determinism ever has validity, e.g., that I must be fed periodically in order to live, to produce, to think, etc., this is a result of the existence of these human needs, which always have a teleological, i.e., goal-oriented, character.)

Historical materialism may suffice to explain, loosely, the general character of a particular epoch, in which the social, economic, legal and cultural norms face individuals maturing within it as *faits accomplis*, as sedimentations

of the past. (The correlation with the *general* character of an epoch is in fact what Marx claimed for his method in his famous *Preface to the Critique of Political Economy*.)

But in revolutionary times—and in attempts to explain particular developments at any time, the historical materialist method is in itself insufficient (perhaps even an obstacle) and recourse must be had to the mediational method.

This will perhaps appear an outrageous statement to those who think that Leon Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution* is "strict historical materialism." Actually, it is no accident that Trotsky was among the first to tamper with the results of the Second International's theory of stages. His "law of uneven and combined development" recaptures much of mediational Marxism; it is, however, still weighed down with verbal trappings from traditional historical materialism.

Whereas for Marx, modes of production were essentially classifications of economic relations, whose comparison reveals much for the student of economics, for the Second Internationalists they had been transformed into self-contained historical epochs which mandatorily succeeded one another in a certain time sequence. Trotsky sought to smash the fatalism of the Second International Marxism by rendering flexible the framework of "stages"; he did not challenge the ultimate usefulness of this framework, nor investigate its philosophical roots.

IV. Method in explaining revolutionary developments

How many times have "Marxists" said, "Ideas lag behind reality"? If this means that ideas can never fully express the concrete richness of reality, it is true, but certainly a bad reformulation.

It may, however, mean something like this. A person's experience with modern technology on the job has not led him to reject religion. Or, a worker's experience with the boss in the shop has still not led him to break with the boss-controlled political parties. "Ideas lag behind reality," however, is still a bad reformulation. First, it assumes that ideas aren't "real"; then it pretends that most people hold the incorrect notion that what happens in sphere A will spill over automatically to sphere B with equal intensity. But nobody, except perhaps some second-rate "strict" historical materialist, ever held such an idea seriously.

Ideas, however, do not lag behind reality because they are part of it. They derive their particular character from their particular relations to non-ideational reality and to each other. Ideas in one sphere may be older, more rigid, than ideas in another. There will be tension between different spheres of individual and social life, some holding back, others pressing forward, the others. However, each sphere of ideation and activity has its own peculiar characteristics and obstacles to be overcome if progress is to be made in the sphere, even if this consists in removing artificial boundaries between experiential-ideational spheres or distinguishing two spheres where one was before so as to reunite them at a higher level later.

In a revolutionary period, say the historical materialists, "ideas catch up with reality." No, in such a period ideas leap ahead of past ideas—especially institutionalized ones—and by the social weight of the possessors of the advanced ideas, the old institutions are transformed.

Where did the reality of a socialist revolution exist before Marx and Lenin posited the idea of it? Where did the reality of the Soviet Republic exist before the Russian masses adopted the practical task of realizing their idea of the Republic of Workers Councils? Where indeed does

the reality of true women's liberation exist to motivate the women's liberation movement?

This is not of course to downgrade the value of partial precedents. The life of trade unions and socialist groups conditioned Marx's ideas; the Paris Commune, early Russian radicalism and the 1905 revolution conditioned Lenin's; and the suffrage movement and national liberation struggles helped shape modern feminism. But Marx, Lenin and the Russian masses in 1917 projected, and today's feminists project, beyond all past, concrete experiences towards a "totally" new synthesis. And since the parts are always expressions of the totality, each ingredient of this new synthesis is also "new," although the accumulated experience of humankind has given us hints of each one.

V. Mediation theory, historical materialism and socialist society

From the viewpoint of strict historical materialism, exclusive of mediation theory, the arrival of socialism is inevitable. It is not a matter of projection by the masses and their vanguard of a new society. But rather, as it is inevitable that the oppression of the masses will get worse and worse, so too it is inevitable that the working class, organized in its large industrial battalions, simply must react and overthrow capitalism.

But right here "strict" historical materialism fails, because it cannot answer truthfully the question "what shall be put in capitalism's place?" A planned economy is in contradiction to "strict historical materialism" because a plan requires projection. It requires that consciousness be the ultimate determinant of the economy rather than vice-versa. Of course, few "Marxists" have ever been such "strict" historical materialists, although one may note that Nikolai Bukharin, author of the book *Historical Materialism*, was also the leader of the Soviet Right Opposition which de-emphasized and eventually fought against the steady expansion of state planning in the Russia of the 1920's, preferring instead to let the internal market mechanisms "automatically" allocate national resources.

However few antiplanning "Marxists" there have been and are, the ruling economic doctrine in Eastern Europe contains a bogus view of planning that is very much in accord with the allegiance among the bureaucratic circles there to a relatively strict version of historical materialism. For Stalinism, the working people are essentially productive machines, incapable of participating in useful discussion and voting on decisions concerning the economic and social projections necessary to make a planned economy really work. "Man as such," according to the Stalinists, only reacts to material stimuli, and "adapts" to his environment quasi-automatically. (Never mind the fact that fighters for human dignity and socialist democracy like Solzhenitsyn, Bukovsky and Grigorenko have not adapted to the spiritless, repressive atmosphere of Stalinized society. Never mind that the economy is badly planned because it is controlled by a small stratum of narrow-minded bureaucrats who do react chiefly to material incentives instead of trusting in the masses.)

Revolutionary Marxists believe that today's ordinary women and men are capable of a rational discussion of economic and social projections—and of voting intelligently for slates of candidates taking a clear stand on these issues. As the idea already mediates their labor activity, so too it can and should mediate the economic, ecological and social life of the world as a whole.

VI. Comments on ecology and sexuality in this framework

Every social theory has behind it implicit assumptions about the nonideational, noncultural nature of humanity. On this field too, mediation theory is able to avoid certain ambiguities of historical materialism.

We said earlier that the mediation theory, according to which ideas are produced to assist in human transformation of our environing world, presupposes a human nature inherently directed toward "otherness." Sexuality is one aspect of the general human need to "merge with" otherness, whether it be the "other" sex or an "other" of the same sex. The mediation theory, taken with this necessary presupposition, thus leaves no doubt about its defense of sexuality regardless of whether it tends toward reproduction.

Historical materialism stresses, said Engels, that the ultimate basis of Marxist theory is the determinism of the production and reproduction of material life. It is possible, though perhaps not necessary, to draw from this a negative attitude towards sexuality, seeing its justification only through its role in the reproduction of the species. Engels did in fact have a negative attitude towards homosexuality.

According to the premises of the mediation theory, there can be no doubt that the Being of humans is directed towards a world-about-them that is living, that our general human need includes contact with the truly natural environment not "worked over" by humans, not to mention the fact that nature must continue to be the input to the economic processes that satisfy our nutritive needs.

If Engels' "reproduction of material life" is taken in a sufficiently broad sense—as including the continuous re-creation of the living totality, the Ecosystem—then historical materialism might not be hostile to the ecological principle. However, insofar as progress is identified only with the growth of the technological productive forces, historical materialism implicitly justifies the rape of the environment to meet production needs, even if it may, modified by the mediational concept of planning, dissociate itself from the extreme of capitalist pollution.

Thus, mediation theory includes two preconscious dialectics that partake of the same typology as do the dialectics of social processes and of labor. On the one hand there is the intersubjective dialectic of sexuality and on the other the subject-object (humanity-nature) dialectic of ecology.

Conclusion

The genius of Marx failed to resolve the tension between historical materialism and the mediation theory of social activity. We must take leave of Marx at this level so as to better grasp the spirit of his life work and to rejoin him at the level of his most profound critique of politics, economics and social relations. We must also take leave of Novack's inconclusive (and unavoidably eclectic) attempts to recapitulate Marx's, Engels', Lenin's and Trotsky's methodology on the old terms, the terms of a synthesis whose internal contradiction has today become unbearable (with the result that modern practical Marxists read very little on methodology and almost no Marx); only then can we "rejoin" the Socialist Workers Party consciously in relating to the genuinely new movements of the oppressed, the nationalist movements of the "internal colonies," women's and gay liberation, prisoner's rights and so on.

The basic philosophic foundations of Marxism must be reinvestigated. The mediation theory I have tried to uncover here may be only a step in the direction of an even more profound methodology of which Marx himself was dimly aware. And whatever we discover on this route must be used to reground the truths of class struggle experience, to see in it the various applications of such models as the mediation theory and the theory of alienation.

Moreover, we must not hesitate to criticize the bad formulations of "historical materialism," for only through such criticism can Marxism be freed from the limits of incorrect, outdated and indefensible presuppositions.

April, 1973

DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM AND THE INTERNATIONAL

By Milton Alvin
Los Angeles Branch

In the "Dec. 3, 1972, Statement of the 19 IEC Members" (International Internal Discussion Bulletin, Volume X Number 4, April 1973) there appears the following: "4. To also conclude that it is urgent to strengthen the organizational structure of the leadership of the International and to go beyond the existing forms of de facto collaboration between the leaderships of the main sections."

This formulation, vague at best as it stands, is apparently designed to lay the basis for a change in the organizational structure of the International by adopting new relationships among the various sections. This is not spelled out in the Statement of the 19 but it is more fully described in the article "In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International," by Ernest Germain. (same Bulletin as above including all following quotations)

Taking note of the international discussion of more than three years duration and the resultant formation of two international tendencies, Comrade Germain writes favorably of ". . . the superiority of the Leninist concept of democratic centralism—and not its various bureaucratic caricatures—as the organisational framework for the revolutionary movement."

However, the previously quoted section of the Statement of the 19 says nothing about "bureaucratic caricatures" in the International. Apparently that has not been a problem since re-unification and up to now. On the contrary, the Statement of the 19 is presumably aimed in the opposite direction, that is, against ". . . the existing form of de facto collaboration. . . ."

In other words, the goal of the 19 IEC members is to change the present relationships in favor of a more centralized form. Whether or not this would be in the best interests of building the International is discussed later.

There can hardly be any room for a dispute in the ranks of the International about Leninist democratic centralism. It can be taken for granted that, generally speaking, all parts of the International agree with and support this concept. This is not the source of present differences. The problem is not in the general concept of democratic centralism but in the *relationship* between democracy and centralism.

No one will deny that under different circumstances democracy and centralism carry different weights and must be given different emphases. The problem that confronts the International is to find the proper relation between the two under concrete conditions where two tendencies have been formed because neither side in the discussion, up to now, has succeeded in convincing the other of the correctness of its views.

A mechanical solution of this problem, by imposing positions which it cannot accept upon whoever turns out to be the minority is not the best way to resolve this problem *at this time*. I stress the time element because there are times when a majority has no choice, when circumstances are such as to make it imperative to shift the emphasis from democracy to centralism very sharply and firmly. Is this such a time? That is the question.

Comrade Germain continues, ". . . our movement is

perfectly capable of a worldwide organised fully democratic discussion, in which all the key issues in dispute are presented before the membership, in which the membership can read and listen to the full debate in swing, then make up its mind and elect a world congress. . ." (emphasis added). It would have been better if Comrade Germain had added the words "and take part in the full debate" instead of the way he expresses it. As it stands the membership is reduced to the role of spectators. At any rate, that part of the quotation to which I have added emphasis must have been written by Comrade Germain with tongue in cheek.

This is precisely where a good deal of the trouble with the discussion since the last congress is to be found. "Our movement" has not shown itself to be capable of a worldwide organized fully democratic discussion, to say nothing of being "perfectly capable." Only a part of the International has seen "all the key issues in dispute." Perhaps only a minority will be found to have had access to all the written material and a chance to discuss the conflicting views. Let us recall that Lenin had very sharp words for those who failed to consider *both* points of view.

Of course, the ranks of the International can in no way be held responsible for the fact that many, if not most, of the documents have not been translated and made available to them. This is the responsibility of the leaders of the various sections and of the International. Unfortunately, it must be plainly said that some section leaderships have taken a cavalier attitude towards documents that defend a point of view with which they do not agree. They have not translated and made these available to their memberships. They have permitted them to lay around and gather dust, not for weeks or months, but for years.

If Comrade Germain thinks his statement that, "There is some delay in the publication of documents in some key languages; this delay can be and will be rapidly overcome. . ." solves this problem, he is sadly mistaken.

It is not only a question of publication of the documents and making them available to the ranks of the International, but following that a discussion in all sections and after that voting for delegates to national conventions of the sections and, finally, electing leaderships on the basis of who supports which point of view. Any procedure that eliminates or deforms any of these steps cannot be and should not be called democratic or Leninist.

It is not in the best interests of the International to hold the next congress without adequate preparations as outlined above. No matter what disadvantages there are in further delaying an already postponed congress, they are not as great as the injury that would be inflicted upon the International by holding a congress in which many representatives of sections would appear without the writ of their members.

Comrade Germain states that "But it would be platonic and a waste of time, if decisions of a general political nature would stop being considered binding for international minorities. Surely nobody can be naive to the

point to think that he could impose majority decisions when he is in a majority, while refusing to apply them as long as he is in a minority."

It is difficult to determine from this just what is meant by "decisions of a general political nature." Under ideal conditions an organization based upon democratic centralist principles of functioning would be bound to respect all decisions of a majority and not only those of a "general" political nature.

Very soon later Comrade Germain clears up this point and goes a step further when he asserts that under circumstances where two international tendencies confront one another ". . . a given degree of democratic centralism on an international scale becomes recognized as an *indispensable organisational infrastructure* of the world Trotskyist movement." (emphasis added) If this means anything at all, it is that *all majority decisions* must be honored by any minority and not just those of a "general political nature."

This would, of course, substitute centralized discipline in the International on all questions for the present method of "de facto collaboration" which Comrade Germain wishes to "go beyond." The problem now posed is whether or not the International can best grow under strict centralist methods of leadership or under de facto collaboration.

Of course, it is taken for granted in posing the problem in this way that the democratic element in the formula "democratic centralism" will be adhered to in the way described earlier. This is, to say the least, taking a good deal for granted given the unfortunate fact that so many, perhaps a majority of the ranks of the International, have not yet seen the views of the present minority in writing, to say nothing of ample discussion followed by national conventions.

However, for the sake of discussing the point, let us assume for the moment that the democratic rights of the ranks will be fully complied with and that they will elect leaderships based upon their actual support in the memberships. This assumption is made on the basis of and the hope that the leaders of the present majority will exercise good judgment and postpone the next congress until all the proper organizational steps required for a democratic congress have been complied with.

In one part of his article Comrade Germain answers the question we have posed, that is, whether or not the emphasis is to be shifted away from de facto collaboration to centralized forms of functioning. He writes, "We are neither based on mass trade-unions nor on mass parties nor on workers states." This really tells the whole story, if it is correctly understood.

Everyone in the International knows that the various sections are still small and are only at the stage of recruiting and training cadres who will eventually make up the central core of leaders in each of them. Out of these central cores will come the leadership of the International. But this day has not yet dawned for world Trotskyism; the reality is that the International is not based upon powerful infrastructural foundations except in its program of Marxist principles.

Under these actual circumstances the International should function not under strict centralist methods as individual sections do, but under the formula Comrade Germain uses and which we have quoted, that is, de facto collaboration. This is made necessary not because of anyone's

personal predilection for one method or the other but because the point has not yet been reached on a world scale where any section or tendency can claim to be the authoritative leadership and to be accepted as such by the International as a whole.

In short, no one has established a grouping of any kind in the International that compares with the Lenin-Trotsky leadership in the Third International or of Marx and Engels in the First International. This is not meant to imply only geniuses are fit to lead the Fourth International. The point is made in extremis only for the purpose of emphasis.

The obvious necessity for the International and all its sections in this period is to conduct all aspects of revolutionary activity in such a way as to *convince by example*. Formal impositions of majority discipline cannot replace the power of successful examples of party building. For example, if the positions of the Argentine comrades in the official section, Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (Combatiente), prove that they are superior to other and entirely different positions, then everyone who now is not in agreement with these comrades will have to acknowledge they were wrong and make the necessary changes.

Since the majority of the present leadership in the International is already in agreement with the PRT-C, it is their responsibility to create such conditions within the world movement that will make it possible for the minority, who disagrees with the PRT-C, to put forward its views and let further political developments decide who is right and who is wrong.

(The latest available information, contained in a letter dated Oct. 31, 1972, addressed to the PRT-C and signed by six members of the United Secretariat, Alain, Ernest, Livio, Pierre, Sandor and Tariq, all leaders of the majority, indicates that these six are modifying their agreement with some PRT-C positions. This is a hopeful sign.)

Fortunately, in politics it is possible to confirm one point of view and to refute another. Events themselves perform this function; imposition of discipline cannot do the same thing. Therefore, a very heavy responsibility rests on the shoulders of the majority who have it in their power to resolve this problem correctly.

Comrade Germain says near the end of his article, "Let us show to the revolutionary vanguard the world over the validity not only of the Leninist programme but also of the Leninist organisational principles." This is, of course, a worthwhile aim to which all should subscribe. It does, however, require a small amendment. That is, that the International show the validity of Lenin's program and organizational principles in all national sections for the present, retaining the responsibility of showing them on an international scale until such time as it is proper, necessary and possible to do so. The present moment is not such a time with regard to organizational principles and we should frankly acknowledge as much.

There is no contradiction in making a differentiation between national sections and the International on the question of democratic centralism. What is suggested here is that the emphasis in the International remain on the democratic side of the formula until circumstances permit a more even balance between democracy and centralism.

As a matter of fact even the democratic half of the formula has yet to be achieved. Until such a time as all the members of national sections have had their democratic

right to read, discuss and vote upon all points of view in dispute, even the first step has not been taken in reaching the goal of democratic centralism for the International as a whole.

In view of all the circumstances surrounding the differences that have arisen in the past few years it would be best to postpone the next congress until the spring of 1974. In the intervening period all the disputed questions can be adequately presented to the ranks, discussed and voted upon.

A prematurely held congress would only create a situation in which those sections that have made all the material available to their memberships, held discussions

and voted, would have to propose that those at the congress who have not taken these steps participate with voice but no vote. It would be much better not to have to do that.

If I may paraphrase Comrade Germain, let us show to the revolutionary vanguard the world over that the authentic Trotskyists by their seriousness and devotion to the cause can resolve all difficulties, no matter what they are, without injuring the revolutionary movement but rather by so conducting ourselves that we hasten the day of revolutionary triumph.