

WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!

# The Workers' Advocate

## Supplement



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## The Sandinistas want to be junior partners, while the Marxist-Leninists are with the strikers

*The following speech was delivered at the MLP May Day meeting in Chicago on April 28:*

Comrades,

For tonight's celebration of May Day, for this commemoration of the international day of the working class, we want to discuss the turbulent situation in Nicaragua.

For over a decade Nicaragua has been an important focus of the liberation struggle of the oppressed. Ten years ago the workers and oppressed of Nicaragua rose up all across the country and threw down the hated tyranny of the

U.S.-backed Somoza regime. This was a momentous event. It shook the foundations of capitalist and foreign imperialist rule in Nicaragua. It was an impetus to the revolution in El Salvador and the rest of Central America. It was an example of a truly mass, liberating revolution.

At the same time, unfortunately, the struggle in Nicaragua has given us a sorry example of the limitations of petty bourgeois revolutionism—a lesson in how the inevitable petty bourgeois compromise and reformism choke and eventually smother the life out of the revolution.

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## Marxist-Leninist Party of Nicaragua (MAP-ML) on the new situation

*On February 27, two days after the Nicaraguan elections of the 25th, the Marxist-Leninist Party of Nicaragua issued a declaration "To the workers and all the people of Nicaragua", which appeared as a leaflet and in El Pueblo. The following statement on tactics appeared in April. The translation is by the Workers' Advocate staff.*

### Basic thesis for the analysis of the situation and the determination of our tactics in the immediate period

-- April 1990 --

The great historical lesson being learned now in practical terms by the Nicaraguan proletariat, is that the emancipation of the working class is the task of the working class itself.

The general balance of the last eleven years of struggle is that the workers and the people accomplished acts of proletarian and popular heroism in the war against Somoza and in the anti-imperialist resistance. As well, their

economic sacrifices permitted the reconstruction and relative stability of the economy. However, it is now being

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# The national coordinating committee and the Detroit clinic defense conference

The national clinic defense conference in March gathered together activists against the anti-abortion fanatics. The conference did not embrace all cities where clinic defense was active, but the proceedings nevertheless gave a vivid picture of the movement. We thought that the discussions at this conference would be quite useful for activists, and the main value of the conference, and we think this is how it actually turned out.

The majority at the conference also decided to found a new national organization, which has since been named the National Women's Rights Organizing Coalition (NWROC). All the participants, including the Marxist-Leninist Party (MLP), have been invited to be on the national coordinating committee for this organization.

The MLP has worked with many of the local groups that attended the conference (as well as with others that didn't attend). We will continue to do so in the future. And we will work with any worthwhile national campaign the new organization suggests. However, we will not join the coordinating committee at this time.

The work which we wish to do to build up the working women's trend in the struggle goes beyond the framework

of this organization. It is true that the organizational structure adopted at the conference was quite loose, and so membership in the national coordinating committee might not be automatically incompatible with what we wish to accomplish. But there is the practical matter that our forces are limited. Thus, in the coming period, we will continue to both take active part in the clinic defenses and to lay stress on building up the working class trend for women's rights in opposition to the attempts of the bourgeois and pro-establishment women's organizations to dominate the overall movement.

## Three basic stands

The March clinic defense conference was itself unable to decide what trend to build up. There were three basic positions (and the inevitable intermediate shades).

Some advocated working closely with the National Organization for Women (NOW) and other bourgeois-led women's organizations and were hostile to what they called "NOW-bashing".

Another section of the conference had many stories about NOW's obstruction of the movement, but did not see the need to develop a trend directly in opposition to the pro-establishment women's organizations. They regarded it as sufficient to do some things, including quite important things like directly confronting OR, that the bourgeois-led groups would not do. But they did not see the need to declare this as a separate trend. The trotskyist Revolutionary Workers Party (RWL), for example, presented lists of demands that did not explain or even mention the existence of different trends in the women's movement, and RWL members seemed optimistic about winning over even whole chapters of NOW. It is notable that RWL called this plan a "clear-cut political alternative" to NOW, but we disagree.

Our Party advocated the building up of an independent struggle for women's rights. This does not mean boycotting NOW actions or being rude to rank-and-file NOW members who want to take part in the struggle, but criticizing the NOW leadership's bourgeois stands. It means not only agitating against the anti-abortion bullies, but also explaining to the masses the different class trends in the movement. It requires directly going to the masses, and not waiting on either the union apparatus or the bourgeois women's organizations to mobilize the masses.

## A compromise

The conference did not accept our stand, and the new organization is being founded on the basis of seeking a compromise between those who oppose all criticism of

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NOW and those who have some criticism of NOW but don't see the need for an openly independent trend.

Depending on who actually decides to join the organization, it may end up as a compromise even on the question of clinic defense itself. The organization seeks to embrace activists and groups with very different views about this. On the one hand, there are those who support NOW guidelines banning militant clinic defense. And there are organizations such as BACAOR (Bay Area Coalition Against Operation Rescue), AACDAR (Ann Arbor Committee in Defense of Abortion Rights), and Detroit CDAR, which confront Operation Rescue's thugs in front of the clinics.

This compromise between trends is also one of the reasons why the conference did not even carry out the elementary task of issuing a ringing reply to the repeated statements from various levels of the NOW leadership denouncing the clinic defenders. Of the two larger groupings at the conference, one trend wouldn't at all accept such declarations refuting NOW, while the other trend didn't see much of a need for it.

This is also one of the reasons why the activity of our Party in defense of women's rights has to be broader than that of the new organization. Our work of agitation in the communities and at the factories on women's rights, of seeking contacts directly among the masses, and of developing agitation that is tailored to the working masses and their concerns, cannot be developed within the framework of the plans developed at this conference. One possibility would be to work on the coordinating committee while carrying out our other work for women's rights. But for practical reasons, this doesn't seem advisable at the present time.

### How to prepare for the future?

We feel that the national organization, as it takes up work, will find itself continually running up against the question of trends in the women's movement. At present, it seems to feel that this can be avoided. The spirit of the conference resolutions was well reflected in the spring 1990 issue of AACDAR's newsletter "MOBILIZE for reproductive rights", which is the first public statement by those in the organization that we have seen.

The article "National conference unites women's groups" announces a new organization. But it leaves out the controversial issues, and simply declares that

"the National Clinic Defense Conference and the formation of a national organization signal the end of the isolation of militant women's groups."

As to the differences among the groups, it states simply that "tactics for defeating OR differ slightly according [to] the size of the group and the number of clinics in the city."

Actually, the tactics described at the conference ranged from determined militancy in the face of OR and the police, to refusing to remove OR from the clinics in the name of "non-violence". It was not simply a question of

what possibilities existed for the different groups. There are those who will not remove OR in the name of principle. Such differences exist in actual practice, and discussing them openly could only help.

And the article declares that linking up with various other mass demands will broaden the movement. But the more such demands are taken up, the more the issue of the organization's policy with respect to the different trends in the movement will sharpen. Both in developing clinic defense and in taking up other issues, there is the issue of orientation—linking up with the working masses or with the larger reformist- and bourgeois-led organizations.

We note that the AACDAR article also says that: "We have seen that lobbying and asking for our rights does not work."

This is good, but it is not sufficient. It doesn't yet express a definite stand on the bourgeois women's movement, as the interesting and worthwhile discussion at the conference revealed. Generally speaking, both "NOW-bashers" and NOW defenders could agree with or live with such statements or similar ones about the insufficiency of lobbying. And, whatever the truth about their activities, neither the NOW leadership nor most other bourgeois women's leaders picture themselves as meekly begging for some alms. This shows that it is necessary to speak more plainly on the issues if one wishes to build a solid framework from which the activists can oppose the pro-establishment trends such as NOW, NARAL, the political side of Planned Parenthood, etc.

We think that it is likely that the AACDAR article expresses a point of view that corresponds to the temper of a number of activists. They were excited to hear of different methods of clinic defense at the conference, and weren't clear on why all the controversies broke out.

But these activists will see, if they persevere in the movement, that the controversies are reflected in differences over practical issues. And it seems to us that an open, straightforward, and non-sectarian presentation of the differences would give them a framework to deal with the obstacles they will encounter in practical work. It may not at first appear as exciting as simply hoping that a great unity will now sweep the work irresistibly forward, but it will prevent disorientation when the activists have to confront the inevitable trials and tribulations that will arise in the work for clinic defense.

Our Party will work as closely with other women's rights activists as possible. We will work to rally the working-class into the struggle and to bring out the reasons for the differences in the movement. Whether inside or outside the coordinating committee, we shall strive to strengthen the movement, rally the toilers around it, and develop it on an independent basis against the capitalist trends.

### Afterword: did the conference pass the resolution on the NOW leadership?

We have recently received a letter dated April 20 from

the coalition, which was sent to all conference participants. It includes the resolutions that were adopted at the conference, or which were not voted on due to lack of time. It contains the resolution **Oppose the sabotaging role of the leadership of NOW**, which was put forward by the Detroit Branch of the Marxist-Leninist Party, and whose text can also be found in the March 20 issue of the *Supplement* (pp. 6-7). The letter states that resolution was adopted, or at least that the "therefore" section of it was, while the "whereas" section of the resolution "was not formally voted on and adopted by the conference".

We think that the letter is mistaken when it says this resolution was passed, and that NWROC will probably clarify this in a later letter or bulletin. On the final day of the conference, this resolution was grouped together with a number of other MLP resolutions as an alternative basis of unity, and was defeated. Of course, with the large amount of business to take care off, the last day of the conference was a bit hectic, and it is possible that we have misunderstood part of the proceedings. But we think that had this resolution even come close to passing, a definite section of the conference would have made a big fuss about such horrible "NOW-bashing". And the activities around NWROC since the conference, such as the tone of ACCDAR's newsletter that we have discussed above, don't show the spirit of this resolution.

Nevertheless, if the NWROC has adopted the resolution, and intends to implement it, we welcome this. We think that it is doubtful that the NWROC actually has decided to work in the spirit of this resolution; and if it did decide to do so, we think that it would have to have extensive discussions with its members, and with pro-choice activists

around it, in order to really do so. But we will welcome any step the NWROC takes in the spirit of this resolution, and will seek to cooperate with the NWROC in such activities.

The resolution denounces the political orientation and reformist tactics of NOW as playing a harmful role in the pro-choice movement; it calls for active agitation against NOW's tactics and for exposing the bourgeois orientation behind these tactics; and it calls for building up a working women's movement, as opposed to NOW, which is based on the aims and interests of well-off women. It does not take a sectarian stand, but also calls for drawing those NOW members who are serious pro-choice militants into clinic defenses and other activities. And it calls for taking part in demonstrations which have a mass character even if they are called by NOW, but without abandoning the criticism of the bourgeois trend.

Thus this resolution orients activists towards building up a trend consciously opposed to NOW's bourgeois trend, and it points out that this means appealing to the working masses. At the same time, it shows how to combine putting forth an independent militant viewpoint with working with those of other views.

We have also received from NWROC a list of National Women's Rights Organizing Coalition members as of April 30. This seems to show that those organizations who have joined are mainly from those at the conference who were willing to criticize NOW, but who did not see the need for an openly independent trend. It still seems to us however that the NWROC wants to accommodate the more rightist trend which, for example, refuses to criticize NOW. ■

## What the establishment organizations want Anti-demonstration laws in Oakland County, MI

In the movement for women's rights, there are two different responses to the crude brutality of Operation Rescue (OR). One wing of the movement confronts OR, and has achieved a good deal in demoralizing them. But the bourgeois women's organizations, such as NOW, advocate relying on the police.

Recently, in Oakland County, outside Detroit, OR has taken to picketing doctors' houses. The bourgeois women's groups retaliated in April by getting three Oakland County towns to ban residential demonstrations. These ordinances do not simply prevent anti-abortion demonstrations, but all demonstrations. Residential demonstrations have also been made use of by progressive causes in the past. This type of law will be applied in full force against them, because the police don't sympathize with them as they do with OR.

OR has tried to pose as a civil rights movement of the 60's type. This is an absurd fraud, but it is only exposed

by the activists who come out and directly confront OR. NOW, NARAL, etc., are content to grant OR the status of a popular movement, and then work for laws against the activities of such movements. This NOW strategy has also involved supporting new uses of conspiracy and RICO racketeering laws against demonstrations. This helps the bourgeoisie forge tools for the repression of all militants, whether from the women's movement, the working class movement, or the anti-racist struggle.

The police already have sufficient laws at hand and sufficient force to use against OR, if they wanted to do so. If they let OR blockade clinics for hours on end, it is because the police are collaborating with them. It is not the job of the movement to lobby to strengthen the police arsenal. NOW, NARAL, etc. are showing their anti-people side when they cheer on reactionary measures. ■

# Why postage rates are going up

*The article below is from the April 2 issue of New York Workers' Voice, paper of the MLP-New York, which also contained the Workers' Advocate reprint "Our views on Eastern Europe/Phoney communists crumble".*

Much has been said in recent weeks about the rising price of stamps. And in the same editorials, or TV debates, or statements from the Postmaster General, you always hear one more thing: the reason for the higher postage is rising "labor costs." Postal workers make too much, you see.

The record needs to be set straight on this question.

The Postal Service is in fact projecting a big deficit for 1990 (somewhere around \$1.4 billion), and postage rates are going up. But the media, and Postmaster Anthony Frank, are not bringing out the real reasons behind these higher costs.

## The truth about the postal budget deficit

In truth, it is not at all surprising that there is a deficit. Consider the following:

- \* Last year the Post Office was taken off the federal budget. In exchange for this dubious prize, management agreed to paying for up to \$1.1 billion worth of retiree pension and health benefit costs for the old pre-1971 Post Office Department. In other words, a chunk of the big Reaganite federal budget deficit was simply shifted over to the postal budget. And this accounts for a very large part of the \$1.4 billion missing from the postal budget. In effect, instead of raising taxes, the U.S. government will end up raising the price of postage stamps.
- \* In its effort to squeeze ever more out of fewer and fewer postal workers, management has been spending heavily on automation. \$500 million were spent in the last year alone, and the USPS [U.S. Postal Service] plans to spend some \$4 billion in the next 5 years. You'd expect the deficit to be even bigger!
- \* The cost of health services and insurance has been rising. Therefore both the workers and the Post Office are paying more for health benefits. Insurance companies, drug companies, hospitals and doctors may well be making good bucks. But although management counts this as part of their "labor costs", the fact is that the workers do not see a penny of this. Nor is the quality of their health care improving.
- \* In its rush to promote "work-sharing", a form of privatization, the USPS gives discounts to companies that presort their mail. Management argues that it saves them money. Yet the discount appears to be too large. When the amount of presorted mail increased

in 1989, management found itself losing more revenue than it saved from this form of "work-sharing".

It is no accident that a large deficit has appeared in the postal budget. The additions to the budget relating to retiree health benefits and cost-of-living payments were planned by Congress and accepted by management close to one year ago. The automation program and the "work-sharing" plans are also options management has decided to embark on, quite independently of postal workers' wishes.

## Postal workers' wages are not to blame

Meanwhile, it is simply not true that "high" postal wages have been pushing postal costs up. While postage rates in the last few years have been climbing faster than inflation, the same cannot be said for postal salaries.

Back in 1970, the top level 5 salary at the Post Office was around \$4.30 an hour. Today, top salary is about \$14.70 an hour. A big jump? Well, prices have risen almost as fast. And if you adjust the figures for inflation, the picture becomes clear. The top level 5 pay in 1970 would be equivalent to \$13.40 an hour, in today's dollars. During the 70's, postal salaries rose slightly faster than inflation, thanks to the militant strike in 1970 itself, and because management feared a renewal of the mass struggle of the workers. By 1978, postal wages had reached their highest point. But during the past decade, these wages have actually lost ground to inflation. [The article contained a graph, which is omitted here.]

Meanwhile, between 1970 and today, the volume of mail has almost doubled, while employment has increased less than 15%. Therefore, management is actually getting a bargain. Twice the amount of mail is being moved at wages which, in real terms, are not much higher than those of 1970.

Management is using the current uproar over rising postage rates to do propaganda against the workers. Already, Postmaster Frank is saying he will ask for "wage restraint" from postal unions during the coming contract negotiations (the old contract expires in November).

While it is big business which will benefit most from postal automation, management would like for postal workers to pay for its automation program. And while the defense industry, the big banks, and other corporate interests have been the main creators of the federal deficit, the government is looking to make postal workers "help" in covering the federal deficit.

Postal workers cannot accept lowering their living standards to benefit the financial situation of the rich corporations and their government. They should argue forcefully against management's lies. ■

# The official slate and the rank-and-file opposition UAW elections at Jefferson auto in Detroit

*The following articles are from the April 22 issue of Detroit Workers' Voice, paper of the MLP-Detroit, which also contained a notice for the May Day march in Chicago. There were about 1,900 votes out of 4,000 eligible workers. Breeze won with 1,000 votes, against 400 for Concerned Workers and 500 for the Dumas slate.*

## Defend all the laid off Jefferson workers

**Stand up for the laid off!  
Demonstrate April 30 in Detroit  
at the Jefferson Ave. Assembly SUB office**

Local 7 union elections at the closed Jefferson Avenue Assembly plant are coming up on May 3. Local president Aaron "Breeze" Taylor is running again with the full backing of the labor-management cooperation gang at Solidarity House [UAW headquarters]. They're the ones who got us in this mess in the first place. Clearly a vote for Breeze is a vote for a corrupt clique of self promoters, a vote for more impoverishment of the workers, a vote for surrender to Chrysler. But without an upheaval by the rank and file, the backroom politics-as-usual will leave the Breeze slate, or something just like it, sitting like a dead weight on the discontented Jefferson workers. Workers should use the elections as a forum to press their own demands.

Here are some of the issues facing the Jefferson workers as the elections approach:

**1. Jobs or full pay and benefits for all the laid off!** The workers must not allow the UAW to write off the nearly 2,000 workers laid off before the Feb. 2 plant shut-down. In the press UAW spokesmen, including Breeze, only refer to the 1,700 workers laid off in February. But the entire second shift has already been out of work for more than a year, and many workers were laid off before that. Income for those workers has been slashed severely. Homes and cars have been lost. Utilities shut off. Families broken up. Despair is leading to drug and alcohol abuse. Neighborhoods slip deeper into poverty and decay. The social toll of unemployment is staggering.

Meanwhile the rich grow richer! Make Iacocca and the other rich auto capitalists pay for full pay and benefits (medical, dental, etc.) for all the laid off! This could be done by putting all the laid off into the job bank, which is where they should have been all along.

**2. Moratorium on Chrysler car repossession!** Chrysler workers bought Chrysler cars while they were working. Chrysler then lays off the workers, impoverishing them, and

repossessing their cars. This is robbing the workers twice! Workers are forced to choose between paying for food or rent or transportation. Let Chrysler wait for its payments until the laid off are back to work.

**3. Cut the pay of the overprivileged union officials!** UAW officials from Owen Bieber on down to the local level live more like rich businessmen than the workers they are supposed to represent. Bieber's pay is in the \$150,000 range while Breeze gets more like \$60,000 plus lots of perks. This goes on while the rank and file scrape by on SUB [Chrysler-paid Supplementary Unemployment Benefits, which are in addition to government unemployment insurance], GIS [Guaranteed Income Stream] or even less. The pay of the union officials should be cut so that it is no higher than what an assembler would be making if the plant were open. The excess money should be put into an emergency fund for use by the laid off for utility payments, house notes, medical bills, etc. This is certainly the least that any real labor leader would be willing to sacrifice for his class brothers and sisters.

**4. Extend and strengthen the various unemployment funds!** The economic crisis continues to deepen. To hide it the government simply stops counting the unemployed when their benefits run out. Large sections of the working class are staring homelessness in the face. This is intolerable! The capitalist state should be made to extend unemployment benefits for the duration of the layoffs. The SUB and GIS funds are nearly exhausted. Such funds must be replenished by those who cause unemployment, the capitalists.

**5. Prepare for an industry-wide strike on the national contract in September!** To make the rich pay for the crisis, to bring back the laid off, to stop plant closings, to stop speedup and overwork, the workers will need a powerful, united, industry-wide auto strike. Little token selective strikes won't do the job. The rank and file must organize themselves for such a fight regardless of obstruction by top UAW leaders.

## For rank-and-file action for the laid-off

In the current Local 7 election campaign the Concerned Workers slate, headed by its presidential candidate Clara Wilkes, has identified itself with many of the demands listed above.

Last year, Concerned Workers picketed a Local 7 meeting, demanding that Chrysler and Breeze put Jefferson workers in the job bank. They also helped build the June demonstration at Chrysler headquarters. That protest raised demands for all of the laid off. It also warned of the danger of the plant closing for the workers who were then still on the job.

Unfortunately, Concerned Workers put too much trust in Dumas and other out-of-office union leaders from the PULL slate and not enough trust in the rank-and-file workers. PULL leaders viciously opposed holding a protest at Solidarity House, because of their loyalty to the sellouts who head the UAW. PULL leaders also opposed holding protest actions at the plant, claiming that what was needed instead was to get ready for the next Local 7 elections. Because of the mistaken trust in the union hacks, Concerned Workers became demoralized and fell into passivity.

Now they have broken with the PULL leaders. And they say they have learned their lesson. We hope they have, because the union bureaucracy has been the biggest road block to the workers mounting a fight to defend themselves from the auto bosses. Any serious movement for change requires going all out to organize the rank and file.

Of course, various union hacks are condemning Concerned Workers as being "inexperienced." But Breeze, Dumas, and the like are only "experienced" in making backroom deals with the auto bosses against the workers. We don't need such "experienced" leaders, we need someone who will fight. If Concerned Workers stick to their guns then, at least, their campaign against Breeze may help to break the stranglehold of the UAW bureaucracy over the Jefferson workers. And their demands for the laid off may provide an opening for workers to begin to get organized to fight.

More important than the Local 7 elections per se, is the work to organize the rank and file itself. To unite them, independently from the union bureaucracy, to fight the layoffs and misery. Concerned Workers has proposed a demonstration to defend the laid off. It is to be held at the Jefferson plant itself on Monday, April 30. We think this would be a good step for helping the masses of Jefferson workers to stand up and resist the layoffs. It is the mass action of the rank and file which alone has the power to sweep aside the corrupt union misleaders and to open up a real struggle against the offensive of the greedy Chrysler capitalists. ■

## Plant closing double talk

Question: When is a closed plant not a closed plant?

Answer: Whenever the auto companies say it is "idled"!

This was the ruling handed down March 29 by an "independent" arbitrator, certifying that the no-plant-closing guarantees in the UAW contracts are worthless in the eyes of the capitalist legal system.

GM had closed the Pontiac Fiero plant. Virtually all the workers were laid off with no callback data. No production

is taking place and none is planned. But GM's high paid lawyers argue that the plant is not closed, just idled. The arbitrator agreed. Bourgeois law protects the scared right of capitalists to pursue profits any way they see fit. As far as the workers' rights to employment and a decent livelihood, the law recognizes no such rights: In the tug of war between workers and capitalists the law is not a neutral observer. It always pulls for the rich.

Over the last ten years the UAW misleaders have sold concessions to the workers with promises that this would save jobs. Recent contracts even contained various formulas for "job security" in exchange for concessions. The concessions have been real, but the job security has proven to be an illusion. ■

## Job bank catch-22

The capitalists have closed dozens of plants. They have permanently eliminated tens of thousands of jobs. And there is no end in sight. Even the various job protection schemes are full of holes.

Take the job bank, for instance. At most plants workers have had to fight tooth and nail to get any workers assigned to the job bank at all. At some plants, like Mound Road Engine, it is used to replace workers on the line. This saves management from paying regular salaries. And, at the same time, it cuts some laid-off workers out of the job bank slot they are entitled to. Such a program invites corruption and, at best, only helps a small minority of the workers.

Beyond that when a plant closes (like Jefferson Assembly), the job bank ceases to operate at all. How absurd! That is when the job bank is needed more than ever. One Jefferson worker called it a Catch-22 situation. Chrysler declares that the Jefferson plant is not closed, just "idled" —therefore the no-plant-closing guarantee does not apply. But then Chrysler says that Jefferson is closed and the job bank program does not apply!

There is only one way to cut through the trap of this legal doubletalk—militant mass struggle! Workers don't win justice in the courts. They win it in the streets with tactics proven in the class struggle: strikes; mass demonstrations confronting the rich and their state; militant resistance to evictions, foreclosures, utility shut-offs, etc. To wage such a fight, the workers must defy the sold-out union misleaders. The rank and file must organize themselves independently and develop solidarity plant by plant, and class-wide, to defend themselves from the greed of the capitalist parasites. ■

# Swedish comrades reply on the question of Soviet history What is state capitalism and why has it arisen?

The following article is a reply by the comrades of the Marxist-Leninist League of Sweden to our article *How to approach the study of capitalist restoration in the Soviet Union*, which appeared in the August 10, 1989 issue of the Supplement. *How to approach* was our comment on two articles in the Swedish journal *Red Dawn* on Soviet history which were also reprinted in the Supplement. The Swedish comrades translated our article into Swedish and printed it in issues #7 and 8, 1989 of *Red Dawn*. And they replied in issues No. 9 and 10 (November and December), 1989 of *Red Dawn*.

We thank the Swedish comrades for the English translation, which is reprinted below. All underlining is as in the original.

Our comments on their reply appear elsewhere in this issue of the Supplement.

The question of how to define the prevailing system in the Soviet Union and similar countries, as well as to establish wherein its mechanisms lie and why it has arisen, is a perpetually current issue. The deepening crisis of imperialism, the appearance of the working class as an independent class force engaged in militant struggle in several countries all over the world in a way and on a scale as never before, and, not least, the heaven-storming mass mobilizations which we witness in the so-called "socialist" countries, parried by the most astounding maneuvers from the ruling revisionists, are things that make this issue more burning than ever. We are living at a time of great breaches! Perhaps we are facing the end of the more than 60 years long parenthesis, that has been characterized by defeats for the working class, by roundabouts of history, by state capitalism, deflected permanent revolutions and dominance of reformism and revisionism?

Both the Marxist-Leninist Party, USA, and the Marxist-Leninist League of Sweden have a background in the so-called Marxist-Leninist movement, which, when we now are in the position of summing it up, must be regarded as one of the various currents within modern revisionism, despite its anti-revisionist slogans and subjective aspirations. The political-ideological difference between Stalin and Mao, on the one hand, and Khrushchev, Deng and company on the other, was in reality merely a quantitative one, and thus in fact illusory, while that which has happened among the remnants of the movement, to which we belong, is a really qualitative process of break-up—a break-up with the very Stalinist tradition of ideas, which we have inherited and which has been the cornerstone of modern revisionism.

It is a tremendous merit of the MLP,USA that they have initiated this process of break-up, that they have cleared the path for it, and acted as standard-bearers in it. In the same way as one can grow with a task, the American comrades have penetrated further and deeper in the

various questions that they have been confronting—from the foreign policy of Albania to the 7th Congress of the Comintern to the degeneration of the Soviet Union. The process has, so to say, adopted its own dynamics, but that has also led to an uneven development, for various reasons, on certain points. The American Marxist-Leninists do not have exactly the same analysis of the degeneration of the Soviet Union and of the Comintern as that one which we have arrived at—in some aspects there are quite considerable differences. Now, this is nothing strange in itself, and that comrades fighting shoulder to shoulder for the same cause are involved in a serious and pertinent debate, is just simply a rebirth of a tradition from the revolutionary working class movement before Stalinism turned it into a heresy. It enables communist militants and class-conscious workers to grasp the issues, to compare the different points of view and thus take a stand on their own. And it enables those who are in possession of knowledge and experiences, that may be of use, to share with us, thereby contributing to the clarification.

That is the background against which this article is to be seen. In *Red Dawn* no. 7 and 8, 1989, we published a commentary by MLP,USA (originally published in the *Workers' Advocate Supplement*, no. 7, 1989) on two articles that we had written on the degeneration of the Soviet Union in no. 7 and 9, 1988. We will here try to answer, briefly, this commentary, thus making our stand precise.

## Transitional measures

One thing, which is like a main thread in the commentary by the American comrades as well as in their materials from the Third Congress of the MLP, is discussion on the transition towards socialism after the victory of the revolution, i.e., how the workers' state is to organize socialist construction and thereby overcome remaining rests [remnants?] from capitalism. To take an example, they write:

"The study of Soviet history is above all a study of a society in the midst of various transitional stages." [August 10, *Supplement*, page 3, col. 1]

They establish that the Bolsheviks pretty soon after the October Revolution were forced, by various reasons, to make some departures from what Lenin called "the principles of the Paris Commune", but that the measures which

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instead were adopted in 1918, like one-man management in the enterprises, the piece-work system, labor books, privileges for bourgeois specialists, etc.—Lenin even used formulations like “state capitalism under the dictatorship of the proletariat”—nevertheless were a real step forward, compared with the chaos and disorganization that was threatening. The American comrades point out that such seemingly authoritarian methods do not necessarily have to be in contradiction to workers’ democracy if they are carried out in the interests of the working class.

Alluding to the purely empirical examples from the situation at the workplaces during the first 5-year plan, that we had used to show the establishment of state capitalist relations at that time, the American comrades write:

“As a result of the need for transitional measures, it is not enough to discover that the Soviet economy had many features in common with state capitalism, because this is characteristic of the transition period. It is not enough to see that various Soviet decrees or Bolshevik resolutions do not implement the principles of a full socialist society in order to conclude that the economic roots of capitalist restoration are being laid.” [*Ibid.*, page 4, col. 1]

After having pointed out that importance of a more careful analysis of the essence of these measures, the American comrades proceed to scrutinize our examples, one by one, in and for itself, each time arriving at the conclusion that this existed already in 1918 and why, that was already discussed by Lenin. Each single case of course does not prove that the first 5-year plan is counterrevolutionary! And then they wonder whether we really have understood properly the essence of Lenin’s transitional measures.

But such a method leads nowhere, it becomes a blind groping. Instead of grasping a concrete point of departure, from which one can get a general picture, they tend to see only trees, not the forest. Each phenomenon is regarded and judged in isolation, and thus the concepts, the criteria, become fluid.

How shall one, by using the method of the American comrades, be able to establish exactly which transitional measures promoted the development of proletarian power and which obstructed it and pushed it backwards? To only look for the result gives little, since one and the same result can mean different things in different situations, and since they, moreover, can be observed only for a rather limited period of time, considering that the historical period in question, as a whole, is fairly short and shows fast changes.

Further—where is, according to their definitions, the border of when “state capitalism under the dictatorship of the proletariat” instead turns into state capitalism without the dictatorship of the proletariat? Is that decided completely by the subjective factor—the general line of the Party? Does the class character of state capitalism change

solely by a simple turn in the political course of the Party leadership? But what about the class struggle then—how does it express itself in this transitional society?

There seems to be unclarity on the part of the American comrades on these questions, something which also reflects itself in diffuse distinguishing between the quantitative process of degeneration and the qualitative counter-revolutionary leap:

“It is possible that such questions will not be answered by precise dates, because we are dealing with social processes that may have taken years or even decades to evolve.” [*Ibid.*, page 2, col. 2]

Is it perhaps so, that they mean that a transitional society is some kind of gliding between different modes of production, while it itself is neither this nor that, but rather a hybrid construction which may move forward, backwards, yes even be a standstill for a longer period? Well, now we do not mean that one can put the serious and profound attempts of MLP to map out the degeneration of the Soviet Union down as equal to the theorizations of the revisionist Mandel: But confusions of the above-mentioned kind might clear the path for such kinds of ideas. For something like that the workers’ state degenerates, then is a “degenerated workers’ state” for a longer period of time, to finally turn over into “pure” state capitalism: i.e. a spectrum with different shades, glidings between different conditions. Or, as a variant of that, something à la the theory of KPML(r) (a revisionist party in Sweden, claiming that the revisionists took power in the Soviet Union after the death of Stalin, but without being able to restore capitalism; instead the society remained with a socialist base but a bourgeois-revisionist superstructure, while now “perestroika” has fulfilled the counterrevolution, carried it through the end by liquidating the base as socialist—note by *Red Dawn* for the English translation) of “dualism”. Thus, it is of tremendous importance to be clear and firm on this point.

### Base and superstructure in society

Nonetheless, the American comrades use to mention a turning point having occurred in the mid-1930’s, with the “institutionalization of the revolution in a bourgeois direction” and the leadership’s turning away from revolutionary Leninism. But, as far as we can see, they do not necessarily mean, by that, a quantitative process of degeneration then began, which later on led to a qualitative leap into state capitalism. It seems rather to be the question of a gliding forward in the transitional society which at this turning point was turned into a gliding so to speak backwards.

They disassociate themselves from the view—and rightly so—that the leap would have been taking place in the 1950’s, after the death of Stalin and in connection with the 20th Party Congress:

“...such a view cannot explain the depths of

bureaucratic corrosion that had already been reached when Khrushchov took power in the mid-1950's. It cannot explain the basic continuity in the economic and political system in the Soviet Union during the years of Khrushchov and Brezhnev with the one already existing for a number of years while Stalin was still alive."

Sure. But if it thus is the basis of society that is the decisive thing—when was it changing, then, in a fundamental way? Or does "state capitalism under the dictatorship of the proletariat" mean that there are no fundamental changes, and that the decisive thing is who is administering the state capitalism and for what purpose? Is it the superstructure that is the decisive thing?

Further. In an article in the *Workers' Advocate* no. 8, 1989 [August 1, 1989] (p. 11), it is said:

"By World War II the Soviet leaders had abandoned revolutionary Leninism and replaced it with maneuverings suitable to a bourgeois state; this was part of the process of restoring capitalism in Russia."

Thus, we suppose they mean that the Soviet Union at that time had not yet become wholly state capitalist. It must thus have happened either by the end of the war or during the next following years. But what fundamental changes took place then?

It may be stressed, that we do not allow ourselves this scrutiny because we are pedants or because we are entrenched in some mechanical, formalist schemes, which demand that reality at all costs has to be forced into ready-made, academic curves. But it is necessary to have a strict scientific method of analysis, based on the firm ground of dialectical and historical materialism. A counterrevolution can not—if it really is a counterrevolution, carried out after the victory of a revolution—take place in such a way as to, so to say "run backwards the film of reformism". What we want is to show that a methodology such as that which the American comrades try to use, is unsustainable, leads nowhere, just providing obvious problems when to deliver concrete accounts.

If the socio-economic relations prevailing in the Soviet Union several years before the death of Stalin were the same as those which Khrushchov and Brezhnev administered when they were in power, and which only now are beginning to mellow, and if there was no qualitative leap in the relations of production during either the 1930's or the 1940's, then we can not but reach the conclusion that if the first 5-year plan was a construction of socialism, then the gains of this construction have not been ruined. These may have "degenerated", of course, but do nevertheless remain. In such case, it will even be difficult to have theories of transitional societies gliding and sliding in one way or another. It would rather be adequate to suppose that the transitional society only now is about to turn over into capitalism. But if so, it becomes quite pointless to operate with the term state capitalism. "State capitalism"

is, then, reduced to what Lenin believed could be applied under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Thus we would end up finding ourselves in the terminus of the Marxist-Leninist movement—KPML(r) and the Party of Labor of Albania have already drawn the consequences of it. For us it would just remain to replace the phrases about the Stalin era and to replace the date 1956 with, let's say, 1934. (See *Red Dawn* no. 8, 1989, "Albanian Stalinism and State Capitalism".)

But of course the MLP does not draw such conclusions. Quite the contrary: the American Marxist-Leninists do stick to their characterization of the Soviet Union and similar countries as state capitalist. But that makes it necessary for them to go further ahead in their break with the Maoist-Stalinist theory of state capitalism, because the main theme in that version is to try to prove how similar the Soviet Union is to western countries. Phenomena like e.g. state capitalism without any market reforms, is to that version something of an anomaly. That is why many Maoists earlier vacillated on how to characterize Kim Il Sung's North Korea, since its economy is as strictly regulated as in the Soviet Union under Stalin, or even on Ceausescu's Romania, where market reforms actually have been implemented, but to a rather limited extent. And that is also the reason why some of these Maoists, who continued to support China after Deng carried out the 1979-80 market reforms, also have begun to vacillate in relation to the Soviet Union, especially after the introduction of "glasnost" and "perestroika". As well, the fact that ruling Castroite revisionists of Cuba even have been able to take back most of their market reforms, which had been introduced a long time ago, with the argument that "socialism can not be built with capitalist methods", now instead beating the drum for "mini-brigades" and "the economic thought of Che Guevara", seems to have been mystifying some, not least the pro-Albanian Stalinist party the Communist Party of Columbia (Marxist-Leninist).

Of course, Lenin's views and stands on transitional measures for the construction of socialism have to be carefully studied and examined. We admit that we have not paid enough attention to this; the criticism, so far, from the American comrades, is thus just and well-deserved. But, first, there are strong reasons to believe that much of what might have been correct in Russia then does not necessarily have to be the right way for highly developed countries today. And, second, we do not think that one can abstract the internal class relations in one single country from the international class struggle, from the relations of strength on a world scale. On the contrary, seen in a somewhat longer perspective, the last-mentioned factor is the one that plays the decisive role. Thereby, we arrive at the concrete point of departure, which we think one has to grasp in order to get an overall picture of what state capitalism is and how it has come about.

## A result of pressure from encroaching imperialism

At the time of the revolution, Russia was still a very backward country. If the proletarian revolution had been victorious in, say, Germany, then plenty of means of production and qualified labor power, know-how etc. could have poured into Russia to help solve the tasks of modernization and industrialization for the construction of socialism. But now this was not the case; at the beginning of the 1920's, Soviet Russia was the only surviving workers' state, encroached upon by imperialism. Already during the civil war, the Bolshevik Party was forced by the circumstances to introduce "state capitalism under the dictatorship of the proletariat" and to make use of the old czarist state apparatus in order to administer the country. As well, they were later compelled to make concessions to the market forces, too: NEP [New Economic Policy]. The entire situation was playing into the hands of the non-socialist class forces. The pressure from them and from imperialism resulted in a change in the nature of the Bolshevik Party, in its perspective, from having emphasized the necessity of spreading the revolution internationally to be able to survive, to emphasize the construction of "socialism in one country", as Stalin and company preached from 1924 on.

At that time, the bureaucracy talked about this construction taking place "at a snail's pace" and in harmonious collaboration with kulaks, the urban petty-bourgeoisie and NEP-capitalists, for which one concession after another was made. "Peaceful coexistence" with the surrounding capitalist world was, of course, despite the anti-imperialist rhetoric, a pre-supposed precondition. This program and these perspectives were the bureaucracy's "realistic" alternative to world revolution. However, reality proved to be another. The drastically sharpened international situation which appeared in 1927 with an increased threat of war, brought everything to a head. The bureaucracy, which by this time already had gradually developed into becoming an independent social force, now had no choice but to revise its line, cut off the country from the world market, beat down the class forces which comprised the agencies of the world market directly or indirectly, and introduce an all-embracing state-run planned economy. To be able to defend the Soviet Union, industrialization was necessary, but an industrialization in isolation meant a huge primitive capital accumulation, which was possible only by a brutal exploitation of the working class and by driving away many peasants from their land to the mines and the steel mills. That was the aim with the first 5-year plan and the collectivization of agriculture.

This does not mean that we are determinists. It is clear that the bureaucracy was unable to act in another way, since an industrialization of this kind hardly could have been possible with its first "program". That would have led to a capitulation before imperialism, to integration into its world economy, which does not provide any space for national, independent accumulation of capital. The Soviet

Union would step by step have become a kind of neo-colonial country, and the bureaucracy would either have been integrated or, more likely, been outdone and removed. This is the very same mechanism as in many so-called "third world" countries, where the only way for a national construction, a national capital accumulation, has been to screen off the world market by means of economic planning and monopoly on foreign trade, i.e. to introduce state capitalism, since there has not existed and cannot exist any space for the "national bourgeoisie" to build up a classical competitive capitalism on an independent basis.

Meanwhile, the Soviet Left Opposition stood for a practical way according to a proletarian class stand. It rejected from the very beginning the theory of "socialism in one country" and stressed the decisive importance of the world revolution for the survival of Soviet power. The working class struggle abroad should not be obstructed and adapted to the national interests of the Soviet bureaucracy, but on the contrary be supported and encouraged. Meanwhile, class struggle was to be waged against the domestic bureaucracy and the other anti-socialist class forces alike, by mobilization of the toiling masses. From the rich, from the market, a surplus was to be taken out for investment in industrial construction. This would give the Soviet Union a respite until the working class in the west had arisen, thereby breaking the isolation of the country. Considering the deep-going economic depression after 1929 in the entire capitalist world, a Comintern under a revolutionary, Bolshevik-Leninist leadership would surely have been able to guide the working class forward, without committing treacheries as the Stalinists did. Objective preconditions for revolutions did actually appear in many places, like in Austria in 1934 or in France and Spain in 1936, and for sure there were possibilities to make victories out of them. Perhaps a real struggle against fascism in Germany would have resulted in a breakthrough there, too. To be sure, if this had still not happened, most likely even a Soviet Union under the leadership of the general line of the Left Opposition would, as a result of the national isolation, have been forced to submit to the Stalinist logic of state capitalism sooner or later. But industrialization connected with a mass mobilization for class struggle from below would, as mentioned, probably have delayed that.

As the reality now was, the goal of production in the Soviet Union from 1928 on was accumulation, not consumption. The most characteristic feature of capitalism—that the society is dominated by capital accumulation—became an iron-hard, forcing necessity, and even worse than in most other places since the task was to catch up with the tremendous lead of the imperialist countries in a considerably shorter time. As Stalin himself put it in a speech in 1931:

"It is sometimes asked whether it is not possible to slow down the tempo somewhat...No, comrades, it is not possible! The tempo must not be reduced! On the contrary, we must increase it as much as is

within our powers and possibilities. ... To slacken the tempo would mean falling behind. And those who fall behind get beaten. But we do not want to be beaten. No, we refuse to be beaten! ... We are 50-100 years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this distance in 10 years. Either we do it, or we shall go under." ["The Tasks of Economic Executives. Speech delivered at the First All-Union Conference of Leading Personnel of Socialist Industry," February 4, 1931. We have replaced the English translation from the Swedish edition of *Problems of Leninism* with the English edition from Peking, 1976, pp. 527-9. —*Supplement*]

It is not the bureaucrats' own wishes, but furthermore the logic of world capitalism, that forces the bureaucracy to accumulate for accumulation's own sake. And verily, it did that properly! Real wages were pressed down and labor productivity was pressed up. Investments in industry rose during the five 5-year plan 6 times in comparison with the 1923-28 level, and was then doubled during each of the following 5-year plans. Accumulation of capital absorbed more than 20% of the national income during the first 5-year plan, and this figure was later to rise even higher. That was a higher figure than for any of the imperialist countries, but about the same as for the U.S. and Japan when these countries were at a comparable stage of development.

But, one may ask, if we now define state capitalism according to its relation to the surrounding world, does that mean, then, that a society like the Soviet one could not be characterized as state capitalist if it had been something completely on its own? Yes, obviously. The Soviet Union is what it is because it submitted to the laws of capitalism, to the mechanisms of capitalism. Without them, it would be totally different. The features necessary for a capitalist accumulation is, first, separation of the workers from the means of production and, second, competition between capitalists. That the first criterion applies to the Soviet Union is a fact—the repression of the totalitarian police state makes it even more obvious. But as far as the second criterion is considered, the Soviet Union does not have, in and for itself, mechanisms for competition. True, the so-called Marxist-Leninist movement has heavily stressed the features of the market system, the reforms that have been carried out before the "perestroika". But as we have already mentioned, these do not exist in all those countries and have at the beginning not existed at all. As well, these reforms have not—except for in some cases—neutralized the general planned character of the economy, but seem rather to fill the task of making the production a bit more "effective" and more flexible, in order to be more competitive in relation to the surrounding world. Thus, the second criterion does not apply—perhaps with the exception of Poland and Hungary—in any other way than

as against the west. Within the Soviet Union, there is a division of labor similar to that within an individual capitalist enterprise.

Let us for a moment assume that a giant multi-national company would ruin, buy up, and take over all the others, thus in the end be solely ruling the roost in the entire world. To then talk about a world market, about capitalism etc., would of course be completely pointless. Without competition between different capitals, there would be no more accumulation for accumulation's own sake. Surely, this would not be socialism, but rather a new class society, and as such a historical anomaly: an industrial slave society but without a slave market.

That would also be the case with the Soviet Union if it had been totally unaffected by the rest of the world or, in one way or another, had been able to take it over. What, then, would force the Soviet economy to accumulate? The aim of production would rather have been the creation of use values. But the hierarchical class structure would, nevertheless, have existed! That, too, would thus have been something as absurd as a Pharaoh's Egypt or the like—with industrialism. A completely stagnating society, which hardly would remain for any longer time.

Capitalism is a process in continuous movement, not a static, unchanging thing. We identify it not by its form or by abstracting each country for itself without its coherence, scrutinizing it with a magnifying glass. No, we identify it by connecting it to the totality, looking for its dynamic. That is why we look to the Soviet Union's accumulation for accumulation's sake, based upon competition with western capitalism, as the point of departure from which we define the character of the Soviet system.

In other words: we do not derive the Soviet Union's relation to the world market from the state capitalist character of the Soviet economy, but we derive, on the contrary, the state capitalist character of the Soviet economy from the Soviet Union's relation to the world market.

Marx himself reasons in the same way when he in *Grundrisse* analyzed the slave economy of the plantations in the south of the USA before the civil war. As is well-known, Marx regarded wage labor as a precondition for capitalism. The worker himself owns his own labor power, which he sells like a commodity to the employer. But slavery was not like that; there was no labor market on the plantations, and the slave-owners did not buy the labor-power from the slaves. So, regarding this slave economy, this system of plantations, in and for itself, then it clearly was not capitalism. But this was precisely what Marx did not do—no, he looked to the whole, looked at this system's ties with the surrounding world, and came thus to the conclusion that these plantation owners actually were capitalists:

"Negro slavery presupposes wage labor, and if other, free states with wage labor did not exist alongside it, if, instead, the Negro states were isolated, then all social condi-

tions there would immediately turn into pre-civilized forms." (Marx, *Grundrisse*, English ed., London 1973, p. 224)

Marx's methodology is very clear here. Looked at purely on their own, the slave states lacked an essential aspect of capitalism. But within the context of a coercive world economy, the position changes. On the surface, there is no free wage-labor, but because the plantation owners have to compete, for instance with cotton-producing landlords from Egypt in the British market, they are compelled to exploit their slaves to a certain degree, to mechanize and so on. External competition, therefore, enforces on the plantations a capitalist dynamic. It turns the slaves into producers of surplus value for capital accumulation.

For Marx, it was never necessary to look for a separate set of laws to explain the economy of the southern slave states; it was sufficient to show that the plantation owners were forced to act as heads of capitalist enterprises as a result of external coercion from rival capitalists.

By applying the very same methodology, one arrives at the conclusion that the character of the Soviet economy is state capitalist. Now, of course, the Soviet workers are no slaves (although slave labor played an essential role during the first 25 years of primitive accumulation); they get their wages in roubles and kopeks; as far as is possible, they can choose what they want to buy in the stores; they have certain possibilities to choose where they want to work and with what, etc. However, since the Soviet Union in fact is like one huge enterprise, it is the state which bears all the costs of the upkeep of its workers from the cradle to the grave, and in turn reaps all the benefits from their laboring activities. In this respect, the plantation owners in the American South at the time of slavery and the Soviet bureaucratic class, the nomenclatura, are in comparable positions. What makes the Soviet Union a part of the capitalist world system is not that the workers are paid wages or can change work place, but the fact that everything is subordinated to the needs of capital accumulation.

Surely, one may point out that while the plantation owners produced mainly for selling on the world market, the foreign trade has always played a marginal role in the Soviet economy. That is right. But, was we already have seen, the aim of Soviet capital accumulation was above all to be able to keep and safeguard an independent economy, to avoid integration in the world market which would result in the country having been reduced to some semi-colonial status. Accumulation created the heavy industry and those arms [weapons], that could guarantee that the bureaucratic class would not lose the means of production it controlled to world imperialism.

Actually, this was the very same kind of choice that every non-capitalist ruling class in the world was facing from the middle of the 19th century onwards. As capitalism developed in Western Europe and North America, there was a world-wide expansion which threatened the positions of all other ruling classes, threatened them with perishing or, at least, being integrated and given a comprador posi-

tion. The only way for them to avoid such a fate was to radically change their way of exploitation, to turn it into accumulation of means of production in order to accumulate more means of production and so on. Such attempts were actually made in some places, like in Egypt, but the only one which didn't fail, was Japan. The ruling feudal class there had attempted to cut the country off from the expanding world market, but was forced to give that up because of U.S. gunboat diplomacy. There were not enough developed productive forces to set themselves against penetration. At this point, a section of the ruling class then carried through the so-called Meiji Restoration, by which it took control of the state and used it to subordinate the entire Japanese society to an industrialization on a domestic capitalist basis.

It is by means of such a mode of procedure in our analysis, that we have reached our conclusions on when and how the counterrevolution in the Soviet Union took place, as well as the reasons for it.

### The sources

The American comrades devote a big part of their criticism to scrutinizing our facts and figures, in order to put against them other facts and figures, which seemingly contradict ours. We must admit, that we unfortunately have not been able to find most of the material that the MLP have studied, except for the books written by Schapiro and Getty.

Obviously, Leonard B. Schapiro was—to be said frankly—a falsifier of history, a lawyer of counterrevolution. By that we do not mean the Stalinist counterrevolution, but the open one, the white one! It is enough to compare the version given by serious bourgeois historians like E.H Carr to see this. Schapiro's book *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* is an attempt to prove that Stalinism is the logical continuation of Leninism. He derives Stalinism back to the stands put forward by Lenin in *What Is To Be Done?* and to the split between Bolshevics and Menshevics in 1903. He asserts that the October Revolution was a coup d'état and that Lenin during the following years systematically suppressed all opposition both within and outside the party, that the trial against the Socialist Revolutionary Party leadership in 1922 (revisionists who had been engaged in counterrevolutionary terrorist activity) was a *show trial* like the so-called Moscow Trials of 1936-38 etc. He even hints that Lenin had consciously made use of the agent of the czarist Okhrana, Malinovsky, since "the immediate aims of Lenin and the police were identical—to cause the maximum of disruption and disunity in the social-democratic movement". And he says that it was "very probably" that the Bolshevics were paid by Germany in 1917. So, we are really skeptical to whether even the facts and figures put forward by Schapiro are to be regarded as serious and correct. We think that the best thing would be if the American comrades could avoid using such a source. It is, as far as we can judge, not a good one.

As concerns J. Arch Getty and his doctoral thesis *The 'Great Purges' Reconsidered: The Soviet Communist Party 1933-39*, that seems to be a serious and well-documented attempt (he bases himself on the so-called Smolensk Archives, which were captured by the Germans during the war and later fell into the hands of the western powers) to deal with the purges in the 1930's. He draws the conclusion that it in essence was a power struggle between the central and the regional bureaucracy, as well as between those who wanted to speed up the pace of accumulation as fast as possible and those who tried to moderate it somewhat. But that just confirms that the terror was a result of the subordination of everything to the needs of capital accumulation. Nevertheless, one may wonder why Getty has nothing to say about e.g. the extensive purges of the Comintern apparatus, the role of the slave labor camps for the economy, etc., or why he presents the butcher-in chief N.I. Yezhov (nominally responsible for internal affairs in 1936-38) as rather sympathetic, yes, even left-radical.

It even to be underlined, that we write this not in order to in any way to make unfair insinuations, to slander the American Marxist-Leninists by any kind of hints. Their ambitions in the studies of Soviet history are serious and honest, and we do not aim to throw mud but, on the contrary, to together with the MLP comrades reach the truth. But we have to point out that their eager search for facts and figures contradicting ours, to show that we are running ahead too fast, may lead to getting into the wrong box.

Neither do we try to say that the other sources used by them also would be either reactionary, like Schapiro, or serious but with strange aspects, like Getty. It may very well be the case that the figures etc. that are presented are fully correct. As is known, researches can be carried out in various ways, with different results, and it is the same thing, as the comrades themselves showed, with statistical figures. Of course, these are issues that must be taken into account. The problem, however, is that even with the most proper facts as basis, it would be quite impossible to get a clear and understandable general picture for the reason that we

have already explained. Categories and definitions will in any way be fluent [must in any case be appropriate?]. It is obvious that the traditional methodology of the so-called Marxist-Leninist movement is no more applicable when one has abandoned the policy, which the methodology in question existed to serve.

The facts and figures that we have presented have rather had the function of confirming and illustrating what we have concluded by using another method, the method of Marx. And there are reasons to believe that these facts and figures are in correspondence with reality, because they are taken from Soviet publications: papers, journals, books, speeches and discourses etc.—and then not from the years of "glasnost" but from the Stalin period itself. More concrete specifications are to be found in Tony Cliff's *State Capitalism in Russia*, which has been a basis of a great part of our articles on the Soviet Union.

Finally: we hope that this public debate hitherto has helped to clarify the essence of the differences between the respective views on the degeneration of the Soviet Union. There remains still a lot to thrash out, and we are happy that open discussions on these issues are also being carried out by other forces, like the Communist Party of Iran or the Communist Organization/Workers' Policy in Portugal. We, for our part, see the differences between us and the American comrades as an example of how important it is to once and for all break not only with the theory and practice of Maoism and Stalinism, but also with its very way of thinking. In the first part of the 1980's, in the break with opportunism and revisionism within the pro-Albanian "world movement", the MLP,USA launched the slogan "Back to the classics of Marxism-Leninism". It is in this spirit that we now, during the winter and spring, in some articles in *Red Dawn* on various themes will go forward with the task of carrying through to the end the break with the tradition of the Maoist-Stalinist movement. In doing this, there is plenty to learn from the International Socialists tendency, from which we also are going to publish a lot of interesting material. ■

# We need facts and communist theory, not phrases

## Our views on the Swedish article on the method for studying Soviet history

The article *What is state capitalism and why has it arisen?* is the reply by the Swedish comrades of *Red Dawn*. (*Röd Gryning*) to our comments on their views on Soviet history. They discuss our article *How to approach the study of capitalist restoration in the Soviet Union* from the August 10, 1989 issue of the *Supplement*.

We are saddened by their reply because it indicates that the Swedish comrades are no longer interested, for the time being at least, in deepening the study of Soviet history or in studying the related theoretical issues. Whatever the shortcomings in their original articles, we had hoped that the important thing was that a start had been made. If the Swedish comrades had overlooked basic facts about the Soviet economy and Soviet history, we felt that this was something that could be corrected. We stressed, in our reply, the need to deepen the study of Soviet history, and we also pointed to the need to deal seriously with such theoretical issues as the Leninist views on the transition to socialism.

But *Red Dawn's* articles of late 1988 turned out to be, not the beginning of their study, but basically the end. It was the statement of their conclusions. Their present article, *What is state capitalism...*, says that, basically, facts aren't so important. It seems to admit that various events that *Red Dawn* had placed at the time of the first five-year plan actually occurred up to 10 years earlier. But they say that these are "purely empirical examples"; to study such concrete issues is to "see only the trees, not the forest"; such study doesn't deal with all-important issues of "methodology"; it "leads nowhere" and is a "blind groping"; etc.

In their earlier articles they had stressed that it was necessary to find the concrete economic base for capitalist restoration in the Soviet Union. They had pointed to the introduction of one-person management, cost accounting, and other measures. The introduction of these measures allegedly in 1928-29, rather than 1956, was used to prove that the capitalist system was restored in 1928-9. But it turned out that many of *Red Dawn's* facts about Soviet economy and politics were either wrong or superficial. And now, instead of returning to the investigation of Soviet history with renewed enthusiasm, their reply calls for a new "methodology" and denounces looking into facts as the way of arriving at a conclusion.

The Swedish comrades sum up their methodology at the end of their article. They state that "The facts and figures that we have presented have rather had the function of confirming and illustrating what we have concluded by using another method, the method of Marx." The method of Marx was materialism, which means basing theories and

views on the facts about the world. However, what the Swedish article takes as the method of Marx, is the use of general phrases about the world market, competition on the world market, capital, the logic of world capitalism, quantitative vs. qualitative changes, primitive accumulation, etc. For example, if one calls the development of heavy industry in the Soviet Union "the accumulation of capital", they believe that this proves its capitalist character. They replace the study of the difficult questions about the internal economic and political development of the Soviet Union with general philosophical discussions.

We pointed out, in our original comments on *Red Dawn's* articles, that no one had yet made the definitive analysis of Soviet history. This is why the task is up to the revolutionary Marxist-Leninists. But it turns out that *Red Dawn* believes that the answers have already known for decades. Referring to the Trotskyist theorist Tony Cliff, they state "Cliff's *State Capitalism in Russia* ... has been a basis of a great part" of their articles on Soviet history. They are convinced that their general views, and those of Cliff, answer all the major questions, and this apparently lies behind their impatience in the face of the need for a detailed study of history and theory.

The standpoint of their reply seems to be that the present task is simply to summarize and popularize an

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answer that is already known and to "break up" the trends standing against trotskyism. The function of facts is simply to "confirm and illustrate" what they already know. No wonder that it doesn't matter when these facts are challenged. If the fact convince someone—great! If the facts turn out to be false, well, they are mere trees in the great forest of decades of Cliff's theorizing.

### State capitalism

The Swedish article lays emphasis on the concept of state capitalism, and they entitle it *What is state capitalism and why has it arisen?*. It suggests that the differences between their views and ours hinge on the stand towards state capitalism. They suggest that our party has some Maoist-Stalinist views about state-capitalism as socialism. By contrast, they believe that they have solved the question of the economic base of revisionism by calling it state capitalism (although just about all anti-revisionists say that).

But the strange thing is that they don't answer the very questions that they raise in their title about state-capitalism.

For example, they raise the question of Lenin's phrase about the use of "state capitalism under the dictatorship of the proletariat". But they don't ever state clearly whether they agree or disagree with it. This is astonishing in an article which claims that the main issue at stake is clarity on the issue of state-capitalism.

They waffle on the issue. At some points in their article, it looks like they agree with Lenin's views on the use of certain state-capitalist measures. But when one studies their article closely, it turns out that they only cite this as Lenin's view or belief. They themselves only present it as, at most, an unfortunate retreat forced upon the proletariat, a retreat which "plays into the hands of the non-socialist class forces." They don't see any positive significance or positive side for the transitional measures Lenin was talking about. And they don't discuss Lenin's views concerning the economy during the transition period, restricting themselves to citing one phrase without a context. Instead, with an almost audible sigh of relief, they suggest that Lenin's views on the transition to socialism may not apply anywhere but to Russia. They think that economic development since 1917 has probably made Lenin's views outdated.

It appears that *Red Dawn* really would like to say that any use of measures that, economically, don't go beyond state capitalism, is revisionism and Stalinism. They would also have liked to say that one-person management, cost accounting, etc. were first introduced in 1928 and marked the degeneration of the Soviet Union into capitalism. When *Red Dawn* discovered that these measures were first introduced much earlier, they didn't revise their views. They simply said, no matter, it is just a detail. And when it turns out that Lenin talks about the revolutionary use of certain state-capitalist measures, *Red Dawn* also shrugs. It neither agrees nor disagrees, but says its doesn't matter. This was supposedly only a matter of unpleasant compromises of a purely historical character. It allegedly has no bearing on

the general theory of the transition to socialism. *Red Dawn* will allow Lenin to say something about it, but if anyone else does, they are guilty of Maoist-Stalinist revisionism.

In fact the concept of state-capitalism embraces a wide variety of measures. Nationalization, for example, by itself doesn't go beyond state capitalism. The reformists and revisionists are deceiving the proletariat when they declare that nationalization, and the state sector of a capitalist country, are "socialist". Yet even under capitalism, the revolutionary proletariat may support certain measures of nationalization. And during a revolutionary crisis, under certain situations the proletariat may even use nationalization as a battering ram against capitalist rule.

When Lenin held that various necessary measures during the transition to socialism remained economically within the realm of capitalism, this was not revisionist acceptance of state-capitalism as socialism. It was just the opposite. It is only by understanding Lenin's point that one can guide the building of Marxist socialism. It not only points to various transitional measures, but clarifies their historically limited nature, the conditions for their revolutionary use, and the need to go beyond them.

One has to be able to distinguish between different types of state-capitalism. There is the state-capitalism of the Western industrial countries, which is a complete economic and political system. There is the revisionist state-capitalist system, which is also a complete economic and political system, although a collapsing one. And there is the taking over of the means of production by a workers' government as a step towards the introduction of Marxist socialism. One has to be able to show the particular way in which the revisionists turn away from the building of socialism and instead set up a new capitalist rule.

### Slavery

*Red Dawn's* article, however, doesn't go into this necessary analysis of state-capitalism. Even stranger, perhaps, is that they end up denying that the internal economic nature of the revisionist system is state-capitalism. Instead they declare that the revisionist system, taken by itself, would actually be slavery.

*Red Dawn* states that it is only the pressure of world imperialism and the world market that made the Soviet revisionist system into state-capitalism. They don't notice that this theory converts brutal imperialist pressure, with its blockades, military interventions, and Cold Wars, into a civilizing factor. They don't notice that this theory whitewashes capitalism for the crimes of revisionist capitalist-restoration in the Soviet Union. Nor do they realize the historical origin of this theory, which it has borrowed from Tony Cliff and the IS tendency, in capitulation to the Cold War-style crusading.

*Red Dawn* has, in their reply to us and previously, correctly noted that various attempts at analyzing capitalist restoration in the Soviet Union failed because they could only see capitalism in a Western-style free market and

Khrushchovite market reforms, but not in state capitalism itself. But it turns out that *Red Dawn's* own analysis hasn't transcended this search for the Western-style free market. *Red Dawn* differs from those who exaggerate the role of open, free market inside Russia in instead looking for this free market outside Russia, in the world market. Even though *Red Dawn* admits that "foreign trade has always played a marginal role in the Soviet economy", they believe that the pressure of the world market and foreign military imperialism is what makes the revisionist system into state capitalism, rather than slavery.

In fact, if others exaggerate the role of the Khrushchovite market reforms in the Soviet economy, *Red Dawn* goes to the other extreme. They don't take account of the competition between factories for scarce resources, the market features that have existed in the Soviet Union for decades, etc. They picture the Soviet Union as one large harmonious firm, which is far from reality. They fail to understand the particular way in which state capitalism actually manifests itself in the Soviet Union.

### Can there be class analysis without dealing with the internal situation?

*Red Dawn* also uses the example of slavery to illustrate its methodology. It takes the example of slavery in the southern states of the United States in the first half of the 19th century. They make the astonishing claim that it is only "on the surface" that the slaves weren't involved in wage-labor. They hold instead that there was competition in the sale of cotton on the world market between American slave plantations and Egyptian cotton-producing landlords, and this transformed the nature of slavery. The slave allegedly became a disguised form of wage-laborer. This is an absurd theory, which flies against the most elementary historical facts. In reality, the market for cotton intensified the degradation of slavery, including the wide-scale commercial breeding of people for sale, a form of exploitation that is not characteristic of wage-labor.

But *Red Dawn* uses this example to prove that one shouldn't examine the internal nature of a system. It correctly notes that if you look at "this slave economy, this system of plantations, in and for itself", then you won't reach their conclusions. But *Red Dawn* claims that this proves that one must not look at the plantation itself, but at the world market. Similarly, it claims that to understand that the Soviet Union is state capitalist, one can not examine its internal features. One must look at the world market and the global situation.

Thus one of the main themes of *Red Dawn's* article is the negation of the role of the internal class struggle. They "derive ... the state capitalist character of Soviet economy from the Soviet Union's relation to the world market." And they claim that the "relations of strength on a world scale", not the internal class struggle, plays the "decisive role"

Since writing this article, *Red Dawn* has continued to downplay the internal factor. In the February issue of the

*Supplement* we commented on the resolution on the oppressed countries in the founding documents of the Marxist-Leninist League of Sweden. There too the Swedish comrades tended to overlook the internal class struggle in explaining events and to instead rely on the external factor alone. Whether it was explaining the crisis of why the reformist stands of the national bourgeoisie or the reason why the proletariat should strive to lead the revolution, they focused on general arguments about world imperialism and the global situation, and overlooked the class relations within the oppressed countries.

In fact, this negation of the internal class struggle and class relations actually tends to negate any real consideration of the revolutionary struggle at all. It makes the consideration of the "relations of strength on a world scale" or the "relation to the world market" or the nature of the present era into empty phrases. *Red Dawn's* present theorizing goes against what had been their own best stands in the actual struggle, whether with respect to the oppressed countries or other questions.

### Tasks of the transition to socialism

The study of Soviet history is first and foremost a study about the transition to socialism, about what was accomplished and about why the first attempt failed. We feel that this study teaches many valuable lessons about how to carry forward the revolution to socialism.

But *Red Dawn* retreats from studying the question of the transitional period between capitalism and socialism.

Consider the question of the economic side of this transition. *Red Dawn* puts forward the importance of seeing the economic basis of Soviet history. But they don't carry through with this. They talk about state-capitalism and slavery, and they handle Lenin's remarks about "state capitalism under the dictatorship of the proletariat" like a hot potato. But they never attempt to analyze what the economy should look like between a socialist revolution and the actual attainment of socialism.

*Red Dawn* holds that, after the socialist revolution, a workers' government comes into being, but socialism cannot yet be built. But then the question arises, what does the economy look like during the transition to socialism?

In fact, as long as socialism has not yet been achieved, the economy must have features that are *within the bounds* of capitalism. It will be a peculiar sort of capitalism, with the working class holding state power, ousting the capitalists from the economy, and preparing for a socialist system. But so long as the economy still isn't socialist, it will still have many features resembling those of capitalism (or even of pre-capitalist economy).

*Red Dawn* evades this entirely. It never directly expresses an opinion on what the nature of the economic system is during the transition to socialism. Their article actually contrasts our approach, which they discuss under the heading *transitional measures*, with their "concrete point of departure" in studying Soviet history, which is the external

factor, which they discuss under the heading *A result of pressure from encroaching imperialism*.

Thus *Red Dawn* pooh-poohs the study of the tasks of the transition period. They seem to regard the entire transition period as an unfortunate compromise, where the proletariat simply tries to hold out as best it can until revolution sweeps the whole world. The impression one gets is that, in their view, socialism will be accomplished by the world socialist revolution sweeping through the highly-developed capitalist countries, which will then flood the world with equipment, resources, experienced workers, etc. They appear to hold that the transition period in any country is simply an unpleasant, if necessary, series of disagreeable tasks that are best dwelled on as little as possible.

As a matter of fact, they assert that even correct measures in Russia would not, in and of themselves, have averted capitalist restoration. They endorse the views of the "Soviet Left Opposition" in Russia, but they don't think that its measures solved the problem of transitional measures either. They state that without European revolution "most likely even a Soviet Union under the leadership of the general line of the Left Opposition...would have been forced to submit to the Stalinist logic of state capitalism sooner or later."

This pessimistic view may explain why the Swedish comrades aren't that interested in the tasks of the transition. After all, they hold that, no matter how perfect, such measures can lead nowhere in themselves. They are presumably mere holding actions, ultimately futile unless there is a world revolution, and unnecessary if there is a world revolution.

### Leninism or Trotskyism?

*Red Dawn's* methodology in studying Soviet history has in fact taken it far away from Marxism-Leninism. And so has their belief in the old answers to the problems of capitalist restoration given by Tony Cliff and the trotskyst IS tendency.

When *Red Dawn* shrugs at the study of facts, they are going against the basic materialist method of Marx and Engels and Lenin. And when they center their methodology on the external factor, they are departing altogether from the Marxist-Leninist view of the class struggle.

They have also wandered away from serious consideration of Lenin's views on the transition to socialism. Their article admits that they didn't pay much attention to Lenin's views, and they say they will correct this. But in the same paragraph they also imply that Lenin's views aren't really so important. They give two reasons for this.

For one thing, they claim, as we have seen, that the "relations of strength on a world scale", not the internal class struggle, plays the "decisive role". This underlines their retreat from Marxism, which lays stress on the class relations within each country, and the internal tasks the revolution has to carry out to be part of the world struggle.

And it suggests that *Red Dawn* believes that the tasks of the revolutionary transition to socialism aren't that important, because everything is automatic once the perfect world revolution takes place.

But *Red Dawn* also states, with respect to Lenin's views, that "there are strong reasons to believe that much of what might have been correct in Russia then does not necessarily have to be the right way for highly developed countries today." However, the issue isn't blindly imitating every step taken in Russia or described by Lenin, but learning the general principles underlying the transition to socialism and studying revolutionary experience. *Red Dawn's* view actually throws cold water on the study of Leninist theory—why bother with something that they think is outdated by economic development?

And their view ends up casting cold water on the study of Soviet history itself. They say that study of the results of various measures "gives little", especially "considering that the historical period in question, as a whole, is fairly short and shows fast changes." This, actually, casts doubt on studying the experience of just about any revolution, since revolution is marked by being "fairly short and show[ing] fast changes." And just imagine—Marx studied the experience of the Paris Commune of 1871, which only lasted seventy-one days.

All in all, we feel that one of the main problems with *Red Dawn's* reply is that its proposed methodology cuts against making a close study of Soviet history and against the basic Marxist theory. But how can we do without a close study of Soviet history? We need to know what was useful and what was wrong. The most important differences we have with the Swedish comrades are not over what year the Soviet Union became capitalist or whether the first five-year plan was the crucial turning point. For that matter, we have still not reached final conclusions on such things. The key differences include that we believe that there has to be a closer study of the facts and a closer study of communist theory, including the views both of Marx and Lenin on the transition to socialism.

If the final result of the study of Soviet history is simply that things would have been fine if a world revolution had taken place, then one might as well not have bothered with it. Nor would there be much value if the final result consists simply of giving a year for the final degeneration of the Soviet Union. What the revolutionary Marxist-Leninists need is a deeper understanding of the transition to socialism, a deeper understanding of what Marxist socialism is, and a deeper understanding of Leninist methods. The study of the revolutionary tasks that faced the Russian proletariat is needed to strengthen our framework for considering what the proletariat today will have to do.

*Red Dawn's* study of Soviet history has led it away from these things. This is due in part to accepting ready-made conclusion from Tony Cliff and the trotskyst IS tendency. They have obtained from Cliff general phrases, without realizing that these phrases answer nothing. And these

phrases have led them step by step away from Marxism-Leninism.

### On the revolutionary wave of the past

Finally, we thank *Red Dawn* for the high opinion they have expressed of our polemical and theoretical articles on problems in the revolutionary movement. But they appear to have a one-sided view of them. They seem to find their value only in "breaking-up" the "so-called Marxist-Leninist movement," rather than the development of revolutionary analysis. But as far as our work of "breaking-up" goes, it has been directed at trotskism as well as other trends of revisionism and opportunism. And it aimed not at denigrating the revolutionary activists, but of analyzing the lessons of their struggle, both positive and negative.

Thus the development of our theoretical work on tactics and history has been accompanied by a deeper and more penetrating criticism of trotskism. Our denunciation of the revisionist stand of Seventh Congress of the CI in 1935, for example, also casts light on similar social-democratic theorizing from Trotsky, which actually preceded the Seventh Congress. And the development of our practical work has also called forward a series of articles denouncing trotskism and, among other things, the views of the current trotskist groupings on united front tactics, views close to those of the Seventh Congress.

We emphatically disagree with *Red Dawn's* view that the whole movement of the last few decades is simply a wing of revisionism. On the contrary, this movement raised the banner of anti-revisionism in passionate debates among the masses, and moreover, through passionate revolutionary work. We criticize the blemishes of this movement in order to uphold the spirit of the best part of this movement. If the class-conscious workers of today should adopt a contemptuous attitude to the revolutionary wave of the past, rather than learning from both the hard-won accomplishments and the deeply-ingrained errors and shortcomings of the past, they would run the risk of losing time and having to repeat this entire history step-by-step in the next revolutionary upsurge. We should leave it to others to denigrate the importance of the movements of the past or to mock them because remnants of the old movement have fallen into the gutter. In our view, many Marxist-Leninist activists and workers of the past fought valiantly for the cause of communism, and our work stands on their shoulders.

In the rest of this article, we will deal with some of these points in more detail.

#### I. The question of facts

One of the basic issues running through *Red Dawn's* reply is the question of the role of facts about Soviet history. In our article *How to approach the study of capitalist restoration in the Soviet Union* we pointed out various inaccuracies in *Red Dawn's* articles. We didn't just go into

these inaccuracies for themselves, but because a closer and more accurate study of Soviet history brings out some of the theoretical and practical problems of the period of transition to socialism.

*Red Dawn* appears to agree that various of their assertions on Soviet history were factually wrong. For example, they had used various examples to show that the start of the first five-year plan marked the definite counter-revolutionary restoration of capitalism. In their reply they seem to agree that various of their examples can in fact be traced back even ten years earlier, and were discussed by Lenin.

But *Red Dawn* doesn't think that these inaccuracies affect their work at all. Not in any important way. For one thing, they state that we "tend to see only trees, not the forest".

Is *Red Dawn* saying that there are many equally significant examples that far outweigh the few examples we criticized? It doesn't seem so. They do not give other examples to outweigh the ones we commented on. They do not weigh the significance of events that took place in 1928 versus earlier. Instead they seem to think that there can be a forest without trees.

They also state that, we "judged [each example] in isolation".

Does this mean that they have additional information on these examples that shows their relation to each other? Or do they have more information on the development of these examples? It doesn't seem so. They don't give any further information about one-person management, cost accounting, etc.

As a matter of fact, in our article we stressed the necessity to look at the various measures in context and in the process of development. We put forward that "the measures must be looked at in the light of the economic and social conditions of the time. Moreover, they must be looked at from the theoretical side. The revolution in Russia provided a test on a vast scale of the Marxist theory of revolution, and of the question of transitional steps."

Furthermore, we pointed out that it is not sufficient to simply determine when a measure, such as "one-person management", is initiated. Even if the measure is permissible in principle and necessary when first introduced, one has to study what becomes of this measure. One must examine "how such measures were carried out. Were they carried too far? How were they modified by the first five-year plan and subsequently? Without examining these things concretely it is impossible to say whether they should or could have been modified differently at this time. Or whether they should or could have been abolished altogether. Or whether and how they differ from what the revisionists are doing in their name."

So we ourselves raised the issue of looking at examples not in isolation, but in their relation to other facts and in their development over time.

But all this is still, in the view of *Red Dawn's* reply, taking things "one by one, in and for itself". It is still

failure to "grasp a concrete point of departure."

What *Red Dawn* means by taking things in isolation is not that there should be a deeper study of history. Nor are they calling for more consideration of the theory concerning such measures as one-person management. They are simply closing their eyes when either facts or communist theory go against the phrases they have obtained from Cliff or other conclusions they want to maintain.

For one thing, *Red Dawn* stresses that a deeper study of the facts is not the issue. Towards the end of their article, where they raise the issue of developing a new methodology, they advocate that "even with the most proper facts as basis, it would be quite impossible to get a clear and understandable general picture..." Their point of departure is, apparently, to start out with proper "categories and definitions". They say that "The facts and figures that we have presented have rather had the function of confirming and illustrating what we have concluded by using another method..."

Thus *Red Dawn* does not find the solution to the problem of having isolated individual facts in a more thorough study of the facts, or of the history of these facts, or of their connection to each other, but in having a proper "concrete point of departure". Apparently they think that one starts with the proper conclusions, and the role of the facts is not to test these conclusions but simply to illustrate them.

It is true that one can hardly study anything without having some general picture to begin with. And it is true that the deeper and richer one's theoretical framework is, the more profound one's study of history becomes. In fact, one of our differences with *Red Dawn* is that they have not made a study of Lenin's views on transitional measures or apparently given much thought at all to the tasks of transition to socialism. Disregard for historical facts seems to have gone hand in hand with disregard for theory.

But communist theory does not at all lead one to have contempt for the study of facts and of what really exists. How many times did Lenin insist that one should not rely on high-sounding names, but should verify each step of transition to socialism? To have theories and viewpoints before beginning some study is useful if it opens one eyes to the different issues that are involved in this study. Then instead of just facing a bewildering maze of isolated facts, one realizes one is dealing with issues of much importance. Then if the facts are unexpected, it can lead to changes and advances in the theory and general views. However, this assumes that the facts are regarded as important.

We don't think that it is possible or useful to empty one's mind and make it a "blank sheet of paper" before beginning some historical study. But we support materialism, and hold that the real world has to be regarded as the source of correct theories. We ourselves have found in the course of historical work that our views on certain matters proved wrong, and we have corrected them.

*Red Dawn's* method of simply casting aside the facts about the internal situation in the Soviet Union, when

these facts don't illustrate their point of departure, is an arbitrary method. Everyone could take their own "concrete points of departure". In practice, it seems to us that *Red Dawn's* methodology has put a damper on serious investigation, not just of historical facts, but of theoretical questions as well.

### Facts and the question of sources

*Red Dawn's* disregard of materialism is also shown in their discussion of sources. In one section of their reply they criticize our use of sources. But in this criticism, they don't even refer to what facts are at stake. All that concerns them is the overall stands of various historians.

For example, *Red Dawn* refers to J. Arch Getty and his doctoral thesis. They state that it "seems to be a serious and well-documented attempt ... to deal with the purges of the 1930's." But they are critical of our use of this work anyway. They briefly describe what they take to be his general views on Soviet history, and criticize it. Since they disagree with Getty's overall views, they don't think we should have used Getty in the study of Soviet history.

They do not even mention what statistics on party members we got from Getty, nor did they try to evaluate these statistics. All that concerns them is to discredit Getty's "concrete point of departure", so to speak.

The same thing takes place with their discussion of our use of a statistic from Schapiro. They point out that Schapiro is a raving anti-communist. They prove conclusively that Schapiro should not be used to teach people the history of communism. But they don't even refer to the actual statistics we cited from Schapiro, and they don't discuss whether they are accurate.

They contrast to our study the use of original Soviet sources. But they don't deal with the fact that Schapiro sometimes refers to original Soviet sources, including the official Soviet party handbooks of the time. In studying Soviet history, and in finding out about the original sources, one often has to deal with historians who make one want to hold one's nose. From this angle, we appreciate seeing a denunciation of Schapiro. But historical work requires more than simply talking about Schapiro's general stand.

In the study of Soviet history, when we refer to some books as a reference, we are not endorsing the general stand of the author. Nor are we necessarily endorsing the overall value of the particular work we are citing. Often a book or an article has one chapter or one section or even simply one particular reference (say to an original Soviet source) that is of interest and that might be accurate. And in all cases, even with respect to good sources, we believe that one has to take a critical attitude and evaluate both the trustworthiness of the facts cited and what they really mean.

Besides Getty and Schapiro, *Red Dawn* also discusses the historian E.H. Carr, whom they seem to like. But the notable thing is that, if they had read and studied the sections of Carr's writings on Soviet economics, they could

not have written their earlier articles on Soviet history. Carr himself shows that various of the measures, which *Red Dawn* said had started in 1928, actually occurred earlier. We ourselves have made a good deal of use of Carr and similar historians.

So, with respect to Carr too, *Red Dawn* seems more interested in a general attitude to Carr, than in the particular facts one might obtain from reading Carr. For some reason, they want to give Carr a stamp of approval.

They say that Carr is a serious historian. But, since they deal with the general stand of Getty and Schapiro, it is odd they don't also criticize Carr's views. Carr was an anti-communist, although not a raving one like Schapiro. Carr's writings are full of his anti-communism and restricted by his narrow and restricted theoretical framework. This can be seen, for example, in his extensive passages on communist theory. Nevertheless, despite his anti-communism, Carr felt that the study of Soviet history should be based on finding some facts. That is why some of Carr's work is more useful than that of more shallow historians.

*Red Dawn* also mentions another author, Tony Cliff. They endorse his work and his conclusions, and say they based much of their work on. But if one examines Cliff's book, one discovers that he made use of all different types of sources. He did not at all follow the rules which *Red Dawn*'s lays down. But it seems that since *Red Dawn* agrees with Cliff's conclusions, he is not to be restricted by the rules which *Red Dawn* applies to others.

Indeed, there are definite problems with Cliff as a historian. Cliff is not even reliable when he directly cites a work of Lenin. For example, at the end of our article *How to approach the study of capitalist restoration in the Soviet Union*, we pointed out how Cliff distorted Lenin's views on the "Taylor system" of industrial management. Cliff footnotes his distortion to the very article by Lenin, *The Taylor system—the enslavement of man by machine*, which he is distorting. And other examples could be given.

It seems to us that *Red Dawn*'s discussion of sources shows that they are more interested in the general point of view of historians, than in the independent development of communist historical work.

## Marxism and materialism

*Red Dawn* describes their methodology with respect to facts and points of departure as the "method of Marxism". But Marx held that the real world is primary, and that theories, conclusions, and "points of departure", must be based on it.

Marx himself gave an example of the painstaking analysis of facts that is required by the materialist method. The viewpoint of Marxist economics, in broad outline, had already been worked out by 1848-50 or so. And, Engels says, by the late 1850's, Marx's criticism of bourgeois economics had been worked out in some detail. (See Engels' introduction to the 1891 edition of *Wage-Labor and Capital*) But the first volume of *Capital* did not appear

until 1867, the second volume not until 1885, and the third not until 1894, with the last two volumes both being finished after Marx's death by Engels. *Theories of Surplus Value*, which is sometimes regarded as volume four of *Capital*, did not appear at all during Marx's and Engels' lifetimes. Had Marx regarded the role of facts as simply that of illustrating one's point of departure, these long delays would have been incomprehensible.

The result of Marx's painstaking effort was that *Capital* was not simply a collection of general denunciations of capitalism, as had been produced previously by many different economists and pamphleteers. It instead revealed a whole series of laws of capitalist economy, and it proved its value over and over in guiding revolutionary work. Marx even paid attention to apparently minor details of capitalism, and many of these details later proved of importance to the communist movement, as those familiar with Lenin's use of Marxist economics to explain a whole series of difficult problems of Russian life can appreciate.

## II. The internal class struggle and the Marxist method

*Red Dawn*'s deprecation of the detailed study of Soviet history is related to its denigration of the internal class struggle. In the methodology they advocate, they stress that the external factor is the decisive. They put forward, as their point of departure, general talk about the world market, the world balances of forces, etc.

As we have seen, they have claimed that our study of the facts about "one-person management", "cost accounting", etc. was missing the forest for the trees, was taking each fact in an isolated way, etc. What is the "forest" they were talking about? They state that "we do not think that one can abstract the internal class relations in one single country from the international class struggle; from the relations of strength on a world scale. On the contrary, seen in a somewhat longer perspective, the last-mentioned factor is the one that plays the decisive role. Thereby, we arrive at the concrete point of departure, which we think one has to grasp in order to get an overall picture of what state capitalism is and how it has come about."

Thus the point of departure turns out to be general talk about the world market, about competition on the world market, and so forth. *Red Dawn* ends up stressing that "we do not derive the Soviet Union's relation to the world market from the state capitalist character of the Soviet economy, but we derive, on the contrary, the state capitalist character of the Soviet economy from the Soviet Union's relation to the world market." (emphasis in the original)

From this point of view, of course, the facts about the development of one-person management, cost accounting, etc., aren't that important. They presumably couldn't really establish the state-capitalist character of the Soviet Union, because that can only be established by the external factor. This presumably shows what *Red Dawn* means when they say that the facts simply illustrate a conclusion reached

from other considerations. From this point of view, issues such as one-person management have no value whatsoever except as illustrations of the effects of the external factor. So if these facts are wrong, it is irrelevant.

And from this point of view, there is almost nothing that can be learned from the study of the Soviet attempt to build socialism. This point of view really means abandoning the study of capitalist restoration.

*Red Dawn* puts forward this emphasis on the external factor as the Marxist method. But Marxism, on the contrary, lays stress on the class struggle. Recall the famous words of the *Communist Manifesto*:

"The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.

'Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.'" (Section I, *Bourgeois and proletarians*)

This standpoint has always lead communists to lay stress on the class divisions in a society, and the development of the contending class forces.

Marxism-Leninism also deals with the external factors, wars, the development of the world market, etc., as Marx and Engels did in the *Communist Manifesto* itself. And communism has stood up for the struggle of the oppressed for liberation from national oppression and imperialism. But it is the class struggle that provides the key, and upon which the external factors act. The proletarian struggle is a world struggle, and the working class must link arms around the world, but this class solidarity has grown up because the confrontation with exploitation takes place everywhere. Even in the struggle of oppressed nations against imperialism, it is the hallmark of communism that it develops the role of the oppressed toilers and takes a class stand.

In any particular situation, the Marxist method does not call for judging from general theory whether the external or the internal factor doomed a revolutionary attempt. Marxism calls for a concrete examination of the facts of the matter. But Marxism lays stress on how events affect the internal class relations. It characterizes societies by their internal class relations. Even when a revolution is crushed by overwhelming, external military intervention, it orients the working class to examine the lessons of the revolution's internal development. And throughout its history, the communist movement has again and again upset apparently ironclad external factors through the development of the class struggle.

Consider the question of struggle of the Russian Marxists against the petty-bourgeois radicalism known as populism or narodism. It was the narodniks who maintained that capitalism developed in Russia because of external factors such as the world market. They developed such

theories as that surplus value could not be utilized by the capitalists unless there was a foreign market. And, if one only dwelt on surface issues, they had every reason to hold this. Indeed, a huge part of Russian industry was directly owned or controlled by foreign firms, and financed by foreign banks. Economically, Russia was dependent on foreign capital.

But Marxists showed how capitalism sprang directly from the internal development of Russia. Lenin wrote a number of works on this. And the struggle by the Marxists against petty-bourgeois radicalism on this and other issues laid the theoretical basis for the development of a Russian revolutionary workers' party. Nor did this recognition of the internal sources of Russian capitalism separate off the Russian workers from the world working class movement. On the contrary, it helped inspire their sense of being part of the world struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie.

Reducing everything to the world market may sound radical. But it bears a good deal in common with petty-bourgeois radicalism and departs from the basic Marxist stand.

Yet this isn't the only issue on which *Red Dawn* downplays the internal class struggle. In the February issue of the *Supplement*, we commented on the resolution on imperialism and the oppressed countries from the founding documents of the Marxist-Leninist League of Sweden. There too we saw that they tended to overlook the internal class struggle in various of their explanations. They tended to argue simply from some general phases about the relationship of the oppressed countries to the world market. They held that the external factor, and some generalities as that this is the era of imperialism, provide the complete key to the questions of revolutionary tactics.

Take the question of whether there are stages to the revolution. *Red Dawn* believes that anything but immediate socialist revolution is opportunism (although they also believe that such revolutions cannot actually implement socialism until the world revolution). They deduce this from general considerations about this being the era of imperialism, and from talk about world imperialism, the world market, etc. They don't consider the question of the internal class development in each country, nor do they consider that the variety of such development makes a difference.

Their resolution also makes "isolation from the world market" the basic answer for why the revisionist countries went into crisis. Here again, it is the world market, and not the internal factors, that *Red Dawn* lays stress on. Indeed, it puts exclusive attention on the external factor.

In this downplaying of the internal class struggle, *Red Dawn* has departed from the Marxist standpoint.

### III. Slavery and the Marxist method

*Red Dawn*, however, insists that the downplaying of the internal situation is the Marxist method. To show this, they

give the example of black slavery in America prior to the civil war of 1861-5.

To deal with this example, we will first have to see what *Red Dawn* is saying about slavery, and then analyze slavery itself. This is a lot about a situation far removed from Soviet history. But the example of slavery is quite important for the *Red Dawn* article. It reflects on several points:

a) *Red Dawn* uses this example to prove that the characterization of an economic system does not come from its internal class relations.

b) *Red Dawn* uses a quotation from Marx's *Grundrisse* about slavery to prove that their talk about the world market is Marxist.

c) *Red Dawn* holds that the internal essence of Soviet revisionism is slavery.

So, following the line of argument of *Red Dawn*, we will have to depart from such issues as one-person management, cost accounting, who administers the Soviet state and economy, etc., and spend time on American slavery.

### What *Red Dawn* says about American slavery

First, let us see what *Red Dawn* is saying.

*Red Dawn* refers back to the "slave economy of the plantations in the south of the USA before the civil war." They ask whether this was capitalism or not. In particular, they are interested in whether the slave is actually a somewhat camouflaged form of wage-laborer.

*Red Dawn* points out that, under capitalism, "the worker himself owns his own labor power, which he sells like a commodity to the employer." *Red Dawn* then turns to the plantations themselves and the class relations on the plantations. They point out that "there was no labor market on the plantations, and the slave-owners did not buy labor-power from the slaves." From this, *Red Dawn* concludes that "regarding this slave economy, this system of plantations, in and for itself, then it clearly was not capitalism." By saying it was "not capitalism", *Red Dawn* apparently means that the slave was not a wage-laborer.

Of course the American economy as a whole was capitalist. The plantation owner engaged in buying and selling slaves and everything else on the capitalist market. In that sense, the plantation owner might perhaps be called a capitalist as well as a slave-owner. But the slave was his property, his capital, not his employee. (Of course, the plantation owner might also have employees, such as slave-drivers.) In any case, when *Red Dawn* discusses whether, in their words, slavery was really "capitalist" or not, they are particularly interested in whether the slave was a type of wage-worker.

So *Red Dawn* holds that, if one just examines the plantations in and of themselves, it looks like slavery and not capitalism. But *Red Dawn* says one must look further.

After giving a quote from Marx, *Red Dawn* states that "on the surface, there is no free wage-labor..." Thus *Red Dawn* believes that it is only "on the surface" that the American slave was not a wage-laborer. Instead, they claim,

due to competition in the world sale of slave-made cotton, the slaves were actually "producers of surplus value for capital accumulation."

What does this formula "producer of surplus value for capital accumulation" mean? Now, all exploited toilers, whether slaves, serfs, or wage-laborers, give up surplus-labor to the exploiters. But by talking of "surplus value for capital accumulation", *Red Dawn* is characterizing the slave as actually a sort of wage-laborer.

And what caused the slave to allegedly be a wage-laborer? *Red Dawn* says that "the plantation owners have to compete, for instance with cotton-producing landlords from Egypt, in the British market." Thus *Red Dawn* believes that it is because cotton was sold to Britain, and not just that, because there allegedly was competition with other cotton, such as Egyptian cotton.

But how does this compare to the facts of the matter? And with Marx's quote?

### Did the world market turn slavery into disguised wage-slavery?

This theory about slavery is absurdly wrong. It is a fairytale that clashes with the most basic facts about the history of American slavery.

Of course, the development of a market for cotton did play a role in American slavery. Through the development of the cotton gin, and the existence of a huge British market for cotton, cotton cultivation became profitable on a slave basis. This gave a gigantic push to the development of slavery.

But this development took place on the basis of the internal nature of slavery. It did not convert the slave into a disguised wage-worker, and it did not ease the slave's situation. Instead, if anything, it intensified all the worse features of slavery. The plantations that concentrated on growing cotton for money developed a system of sweating the slaves so badly that they regularly wore out and died in a few years. And other plantations developed whose role was to breed slaves like cattle for sale to the cotton-growers. Some states specialized in cotton, while others specialized in breeding slaves.

The slave was not a disguised wage-worker. The slave was bought and sold like cattle, and bred like cattle. It was not just "on the surface" that the slave wasn't a wage-worker. The slave was no more a wage-worker than the cattle or horses on the plantation.

Furthermore, the vast extension of slavery that took place also intensified the contradictions between the slave-owners and the non-slave-owning section of the exploiters.

The position of the slave was not advanced to a form of wage-labor by the world market, and slavery did not become a mere surface appearance. Instead, if anything, the world market for cotton made the slave chains heavier than ever, and underlined the gulf between the status of slave labor and wage-labor. These slave chains were only broken later by the bitter and bloody strife called the Civil War.

As a result of the Civil War, slavery was abolished. But this gigantic mass struggle, both the war and the Reconstruction period that followed it, was led by the northern bourgeoisie. As a result, it ended in a compromise between the northern bourgeoisie and the former slave-owners. The black masses remained oppressed and discriminated against. The black people were subjected to share-cropping and other exceptionally vicious forms of exploitation. The oppression of the black people, in its varying forms, and the struggle against it, has remained one of the central issues of American politics to this day.

Thus pointing to the sale of cotton on the world market can in no way replace the examination of the class relations in the slave economy itself. Nor, for that matter, can it explain the Civil War. Far from showing the value of *Red Dawn's* method of deriving the nature of a country's social system from a general mention of the country's connection to the world market, the example of slavery shows its emptiness.

### The quotation from Marx

But what about the quotation from Marx?

This quotation actually has nothing to do with the theories of *Red Dawn* about American slavery.

*Red Dawn* talks about competition on the world market. But the quotation from Marx doesn't even mention the world market.

*Red Dawn* talks about the plantation system being slavery, rather than capitalism, only "on the surface". But what does the quotation say? When it says that "Negro slavery presupposes wage labor," it refers to "free states with wage labor" existing alongside the slave states. Clearly Marx is talking about wage labor in the free states existing alongside slave labor in the plantations. This is a simple statement of what existed in the U.S., and has nothing to do with redefining the slave-system on the plantations.

It could also be added that selling cotton to Britain presupposed the existence of British wage-laborers, who worked in the British textile mills which provided the market for Southern cotton. But the existence of wage-labor in British factories doesn't help *Red Dawn's* view of the plantation either.

*Red Dawn* says that Marx believed "it was sufficient to show that the plantation owners were forced to act as heads of capitalist enterprises as a result of external coercion from rival capitalists." This has nothing to do with the quotation.

*Red Dawn* gives this quotation from Marx as their model of Marx's method. Actually, it is just a brief example in a long discussion of money in Marx's *Grundrisse*. *Red Dawn* doesn't discuss the context from which the quotation comes. In fact, they probably didn't get the quotation directly from the *Grundrisse* but from a secondary source, because they leave out an important part of it, and it is very unlikely that *Red Dawn* would itself have left these words out if they had known of them. The omitted section points out

that the slavery being discussed was "incompatible with the development of bourgeois society and disappears with it".

So far from Marx saying that the plantation system was really a form of bourgeois society, with the slaves being the wage-laborers, Marx asserts the exact opposite. He states that the southern slave system of plantations was "incompatible" with the further development of American capitalism.

Let's look at the complete sentence on American slavery. The italics are as in the original, but we have placed the omitted words in boldface.

**"Negro slavery—a purely industrial slavery—which is, besides, incompatible with the development of bourgeois society and disappears with it, presupposes wage labour, and if other, free states with wage labour did not exist alongside it, if, instead, the Negro states were isolated, then all social conditions there would immediately turn into pre-civilized forms."** (Marx, *Grundrisse, Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, English ed., Notebook II, "The chapter on Money (continuation)", p. 224)

This quotation simply has nothing to do with *Red Dawn's* theorizing on American slavery.

But there is another issue as well. *Red Dawn* uses this quotation to show the Marxist method. But we think that there has to be a much more serious approach to Marxism. There has to be a real study of what Marxism-Leninism teaches about economics, politics, and revolutionary struggle. This cannot be done on such a casual basis.

Our Party has repeatedly studied the writings of Marx, Engels, and Lenin and other communist writings. We have found this to be extremely important. It is not just a question of learning a few facts about Marxism, but of grasping the Marxist outlook and the general outlines of Marxist-Leninist theory. We live in a bourgeois society, and we are bombarded by bourgeois ideas. (For that matter, the study of history also forces us to deal with bourgeois historians, who propagate their bourgeois outlook in their books.) And we also are products of the times and of the past revolutionary movement, and there are many deeply-ingrained views from the past that are wrong. As a result, it takes work and perseverance to develop a consistently materialist and communist outlook.

When *Red Dawn* puts forward an isolated quotation to prove that the Marxist method does not dwell on the internal class relations, or when they put aside as outdated the Leninist views on transition to socialism, it raises the question of whether they realize the need to seriously study Marxism.

### Slavery and the Soviet revisionism

*Red Dawn* goes on to apply this theory of slavery to Soviet revisionism. They actually advocate that the intrinsic internal nature of the Soviet Union is slavery. True, a slavery with wages, education, a freedom to change jobs, etc. But all these are mere internal features of Soviet

revisionism, which aren't that important. It is supposedly only the world market and world imperialist system that turns Soviet Union into a state capitalist society.

Thus, right after the passage on American slavery, they turn to the Soviet Union. They say that "the Soviet workers are no slaves", are paid wages, can buy what they choose, "have certain possibilities" to choose where they work, etc. Nevertheless, they say, "since the Soviet Union in fact is like one huge enterprise, it is the state which bears all the costs of the upkeep of its workers from the cradle to the grave, and in turn reaps all the benefits from the laboring activities. In this respect, the plantation owners in the American South at the time of slavery and the Soviet bureaucratic class, the nomenclatura, are in comparable positions. What makes the Soviet Union a part of the capitalist world system is not that the workers are paid wages or can change work place, but the fact that everything is subordinated to the needs of capital accumulation."

The American slaves were not paid wages, were not allowed to learn to read, did not have much spent on their upkeep, had no voice in where they worked, etc. But all this is secondary. Since the Soviet bureaucracy as a whole reaps the benefits from the workers labor, *Red Dawn* says that is similar to the Southern plantation system.

This is absurd phrasemongering. In the U.S. too, the bourgeoisie as a whole reaps the benefits from the workers'

labor. Perhaps "in this respect" the plantation-system of slavery still exists in the U.S. as well?

Furthermore, *Red Dawn* actually points to the "cradle to grave" social network in the Soviet system as a sign of slavery. They apparently don't think it is a concession to the working class that the Soviet state has to bear, however inadequately, various welfare costs, but supposedly a sign of 19th-century plantation slavery.

Presumably *Red Dawn* hasn't thought through the implementations of this theory. Take health care for example. Britain has a national health system, although it is being torn down dramatically in recent years. This means that the state bears the "cradle to grave" responsibility for health care. In the United States, however, there is private health care, and tens of millions of working class people cannot afford medical care. According to the line of reasoning of *Red Dawn*, Britain's health system would be closer to the slave system of the Southern plantation owners.

*Red Dawn's* theory of slavery inadvertently falls back to the position of some bourgeois theories that characterize all "collectivism" as slavery or feudalism. Once one abandons a close study of the actual economics and politics, once the internal situation and the class relations become irrelevant, then the path is open to the most arbitrary theorizing.

(To be continued) ■

## When will they get freedom? Haitian people force another tyrant into exile

On March 10, Gen. Prosper Avril, tyrant of Haiti for the last year and a half, resigned and fled. Only a U.S. military aircraft saved him from the wrath of the Haitian people.

Rapidly spreading demonstrations had demanded his resignation. For five days protesters threw up barricades in cities across the country. Activists fought with police and troops who fired on them. A general strike shut down stores, offices, and schools. Crowds of people stormed and sacked government offices, and then began burning the homes of known Tontons Macoute (the network of thugs set up by the former Duvalier dictatorship to terrorize the Haitian people).

The demonstrations became much fiercer after word spread of a murder by government troops. When firing into a crowd of demonstrators in Port-au-Prince, soldiers had killed an 11-year-old girl who was standing nearby.

The mass actions were launched as a protest against Avril's rule, which had become noticeably more brutal in the preceding months. As demands for change grew louder, Avril clamped down savagely, jailing, beating, and exiling opposition figures. He began to rely heavily on the support

of Tontons Macoute. As the demonstrations and strikes spread over Haiti, Avril was deserted by almost every other sector of society, including business and military chiefs. He also lost the backing of Haiti's imperialist patrons—the U.S. and France—who figured a change of horses was urgently called for.

Thus Avril turned over power to another general, who in turn handed over the government to a women supreme court judge, Ertha Pascal-Trouillout. The new regime began with lots of promises about civilian rule, elections, and reforms. But the iron fist of the generals, backed up by U.S. imperialism, is only faintly hidden by the new regime's velvet glove. And Pascal-Trouillout is a representative of the Haitian elite, far removed from the needs of the poverty-stricken masses.

Experience has shown that as long as the Duvalierist military and the Macoutes remain entrenched in Haiti, no shred of democracy won by the masses in struggle will last long. These forces of terror exist to defend the interests of the Haitian bourgeois elite and of imperialism. Revolution remains the urgent need of the toilers of Haiti. ■

## The Sandinistas want to be junior partners, while the Marxist-Leninists are with the strikers

Continued from the front page

These days, comrades, we are witnessing the closing chapter in this recent epoch of struggle. Three days ago the new government was installed in Nicaragua. The Chamorro government is the rotten product of ten years of CIA war, of U.S. economic blockade, of blackmail and pressure. It is a government of capitalist counterrevolution—the coming to power of ordinary, garden-variety, capitalist and landlord parasites—who have been such a blight on the workers and peasants throughout Central America.

The installation of Chamorro marks the end of the revolutionary wave begun in Nicaragua a decade ago. It marks the defeat of that revolution not only because the reactionaries have taken power, but also because the petty bourgeois Sandinistas have gone over to being a junior partner to the capitalist reactionaries.

At the same, the coming to power of the loud-mouthed capitalists marks the beginning of a new era of struggle by the masses, an era where the workers must learn the lessons of the past revolution and organize their movement on the class conscious lines long pointed to by the Marxist-Leninist Party of Nicaragua.

The first signs of this new struggle have appeared in the wave of strikes the swept Managua this month. Whether this wave of struggle will grow or pass away as quickly as it began, we cannot say. But in it can be seen various of the trends that can be expected to mark the transition to a new period of mass struggle. And from it we get, at the very least, a reminder that the workers and exploited cannot be kept in the shadows forever.

So comrades, this is what we want to discuss tonight. First the nature of the new government that has just taken power. And secondly, the strike wave and what can be learned from it.

### The chicken-footed government

Comrades, the new government is a funny looking creature. Nicaraguans are calling it the “pata de gallo”—a chicken-footed government—because it has three claws.

One claw is composed of the contras and the politicians who speak for them. These are the representatives of extreme counterrevolution, the forces who are out for revenge, for re-snatching the land from the peasants, for destroying the cooperatives and state enterprises, for stripping the workers and peasants of any and all rights.

The contras have, so far, retained their arms and military organization. Meanwhile, they are represented by the most reactionary politicians of the UNO, the 14-party coalition that beat the Sandinistas in the elections. Just two days ago, UNO split. Eight parties left in protest against

Chamorro and have rallied under the leadership of the new vice-president of Nicaragua, Virgilio Godoy. This eight-party coalition is acting, in the government, as the political voice for the demands of the contra army. Besides holding the vice-presidency, these politicians apparently also have the presidency of the national assembly and also two posts in the cabinet—the ministry of agriculture and the ministry of construction and transportation.

A second claw of the chicken-footed government is that of the right-wing business owners headed by Violeta Chamorro, the new Nicaraguan president. This wing has basically the same dirty aims as the contras. But for the time being they see the need to moderate their appetite and maneuver with the Sandinistas to keep the masses in check. Chamorro has kept the most important cabinet posts for this claw of the chicken-footed government—that of the ministry of defense which heads the army, the ministry for running the police forces, the foreign ministry, and so forth.

The third claw is that of the Sandinistas. While claiming they would defend the gains of the revolution and “govern from below,” the Sandinistas have been negotiating a deal to become junior partners in the new capitalist government. The way the deal has been worked out, at least for the moment, is to give Sandinista bigshot Humberto Ortega the post of chief of the army, and to retain Sandinistas in all of the key officer positions in the military.

This then, is the chicken-footed government of Violeta Chamorro. Whether this arrangement can be held together is anybody's guess.

There are only two things that can be said for sure about this arrangement. First is that it is extremely unstable. And second, that no matter what faction comes to dominate, the Nicaraguan masses will suffer.

### Contra war

Take the question of the contra war. The new regime is already threatening to break up over this question.

Chamorro promised that her election victory would bring peace. Her scheme, worked out in negotiations with the Sandinista leadership, has been to let the contras voluntarily disarm themselves under the auspices of a UN peace keeping force. Meanwhile, she wants to temporarily keep on Humberto Ortega and other Sandinista military officers. She needs them if she is to not to be totally subject to the whims of the roving armed Somocista bands. But she also is using them, as is publicly declared in Nicaragua by her and Humberto alike, to carry out the disarming of the working masses. Chamorro's advisers have repeatedly pointed out that they believe the Sandinistas, with their past revolutionary credentials, can more easily convince the working people to give up their arms than any other force.

But the retention of Ortega as army chief has caused an uproar. It appears that the UNO split over this issue. The ministers of agriculture and transportation have refused to take their posts, demanding the resignation of Ortega. The contras have refused to disarm. And, it seems, the U.S. government has backed them up, at least for the moment, with threats to withhold foreign aid to the new regime unless Ortega is removed.

So, despite innumerable peace agreements, the contra war is far from over. Contras have continued to carry out attacks on peasants in the country side, right up to inauguration day. For the time being, it appears that U.S. imperialism and Nicaraguan reaction are keeping alive an army that can be used to terrorize the working people and especially the peasants and farm workers.

### The economy

Meanwhile, the economy continues to collapse. One thing that all the governing chicken feet agree on is that Nicaragua needs big foreign loans to prop up the economy, and that means still more austerity for the masses.

Dona Chamorro has sent her representatives to arrange loans and aid from the U.S., Japan and other western countries. But so far, the \$300 million in aid that the U.S. has promised is still stalled in Congress. As well, the commercial bankers and aid specialists at the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank say they cannot lend money to Nicaragua. They want arrangements to pay off the \$8 billion foreign debt Nicaragua already owes. They say that additional loans are unlikely unless the U.S. persuades Japan and western European governments to join in providing \$500 million in interim loans to bolster Managua's foreign exchange reserves. There is great concern in financial circles about the stability of the new regime. They will want "guarantees," including more austerity measures against the masses.

Now it is possible that the end of the U.S. economic embargo, and the acquisition of some foreign aid, could lift the economy a bit from extreme depths to which it has plummeted. But, whether or not the economy is slightly improved, it is clear that to satisfy her imperialist backers Chamorro will have to impose even tougher austerity measures against the masses. Indeed, her devaluation of Nicaraguan currency was a beginning on this road.

But more on that later. For the moment let me just emphasize that it is precisely the pay-cutting, layoffs, and other austerity measures—along with the contra war—that is fueling the anger of the masses and opening up the possibility for a reemergence of mass struggle. While the headlines are filled with the squabbles within the chicken footed government, the most important factor for the future of Nicaragua, the working masses, seem to be coming to life.

### The emergence of mass struggle

In the last month, various sections of the Nicaraguan masses have begun to take to the streets in strikes and demonstrations. What does this development mean?

It appears that, despite the results of the February elections, there is wide dissatisfaction among the masses against all three claws of this chicken-footed government. And more, it appears that some sections of the masses are prepared to take mass action to demand an end to the contras and to resist the government's austerity drive.

We have heard reports, for example, of the re-emergence of neighborhood committees preparing to defend housing and property titles, milk programs for children, schools and child-care centers, street repairs and lighting. We have also heard about thousands of homeless people seizing empty lots in Managua to build shacks for themselves. There have been, as well, reports from the countryside of cooperativist peasants organizing to protect the land they gained from the revolution. Speaking of this situation, a cooperative member in San Francisco Libre, across the lake from Managua, is quoted as declaring, "We will use sticks, machetes and bullets to defend what has cost us so much..." And we have heard of numbers of protests demanding the disarming of the contras. For instance, hours after the contras and Chamorro and the Sandinistas reached their last demobilization agreement, it is reported that a U.S. embassy vehicle carrying Bernard Aronson—the assistant secretary of state of inter-American affairs—was surrounded by angry people who chanted anti-contra slogans and beat on the car as it left Managua's airport.

Most significant, however, has been the emergence of the strike movement.

In mid-March a number of strikes broke out. Most notable was that of the workers at the Corona vegetable oil plant. Organized in an independent union, and influenced by the Marxist-Leninist Party of Nicaragua and other leftists, the Corona workers defied the Sandinista authorities, struck for two weeks, and won a 95% wage increase.

This, and other initial victories, appear to have inspired other workers to take action. Strikes spread to the cab drivers, construction workers, miners, and to workers at a series of plants and in the public sector in and around Managua. By the day of Chamorro's inauguration, the strikes had spread to almost every sector in Managua. Telephone operators and technicians cut off virtually all phone service for several days. Electrical and water works employees shut down those operations. Strikes even spread into banking, state-run TV, and the foreign ministry.

The strikers commonly demanded, and won, 100% wage increases. They also put up demands for protection against firings and layoffs. And we have also heard that in a number of strikes the workers demanded the disarming of the contras.

### The chicken-footed government against the strike movement

How have the different political forces reacted to this

strike wave?

For her part, Chamorro viciously denounced the strikes as an attempt to undermine the new government. And just yesterday she gave the strikers her reply. She cut the value of the cordoba, the Nicaraguan currency, in half. With a stroke of the pen Chamorro nullified the wage gains of most of the strikers and slashed the livelihood of the rest of the workers and peasants in half.

Meanwhile, the contra-UNO forces responded as you would expect. Not long ago they posed as champions of workers' strikes in the hopes of embarrassing the Sandinista regime and scoring political points for the right-wing opposition. But today they are viciously denouncing the strikes like the loud-mouthed capitalists they are. They claim the strikes are just a Sandinista plot aimed hobbling the new government with labor costs it can't sustain.

But what, in fact, did the Sandinista leaders do? From March on, while the Sandinistas still held the reigns of government, they had their labor ministry outlaw virtually every strike. The Sandinista officials denounced the strikers for disrupting "stability" and "peaceful transition" to the new regime. And they condemned what they called "excessive" demands for endangering the new government's ability to get foreign loans. Meanwhile, in places where top Sandinista union officials still had some influence they pressured strikers to return to work or even split the strikes.

Oh to be sure, the Sandinistas—in order to posture for their disgruntled supporters—had to give in to various wage demands. No doubt they may have even given a few big pay hikes to reward loyal Sandinistas, such as in the foreign ministry. And there is no question that the Sandinistas also used the pressure from the strike wave to put heat on Chamorro for a better place in the pecking order of the chicken-footed government.

But on the whole, the Sandinistas tried to keep a lid on things. They wanted to prove to Chamorro and Bush that they are the guarantors of stability and order. Indeed the president of the Sandinistas, Luis Carrion, opposed the strikes so vehemently that he earned the cry of "traitor" even from rank-and-file Sandinistas themselves.

### **Trends in the strike movement**

But if all these forces stand against the strikers, who has championed the cause of the workers? Who has stood with them in the struggle against both the capitalist bloodsuckers and the Sandinista bureaucrats? Who has put the interests of the starving workers in the first place, and not wheeling and dealing for a place in the chicken-footed government?

These, most importantly, are the worker communists, the adherents of the Marxist-Leninist Party of Nicaragua, the militants of the Workers Front. They joined in the strike movement and worked to encourage the independent motion of the workers.

During the elections, and following them, the MLPN put forward a program of struggle for the masses. Its communi-

que after the elections set out tasks needed to resist the dismantling of the gains won by the revolution. It focused on defense of the conditions of the masses. Among other things, it called for a fight to index wages to the soaring cost of living. It called for mass struggle so that not a single layoff or unjust firing is allowed from the factories and offices. And it also opposed surrendering arms and called for organizing worker and peasant militias.

The comrades of the MLPN took this call-to-action deep among the masses. And whether it was on the picket lines, or in mass meetings, or in debates in the National Assembly, the MLPN worked to develop the workers' resistance into a class-conscious struggle that can open the way to a new revolutionary battle for working class power.

But the comrades of the MLPN and the Workers Front are by no means the only significant force in this strike movement. It appears that one of the main reasons that the strikes spread so rapidly, and encompassed such a broad part of the Managua workers, is that a section of the Sandinista rank-and-file became upset with the Sandinista leaders and decided it was time to fight.

This development appears to have led to a boiling atmosphere among the masses where old allegiances are shifting and new organizational forms are being called for everyday. We have heard, for example, that there has been a call to form a new union center, independent from the Sandinista's CST. We have also heard of calls for an independent May 1st march this year. In this atmosphere, it appears that even some Sandinista officials, at least lower level officials, have taken part in the strike movement and seem to be vacillating between the militancy of the masses and the compromising policy of the Sandinista leadership.

We have very little information on these latest developments and can say little about them. We cannot tell, for example, whether the calls for independent action and organization represent motion towards a real break with petty-bourgeois Sandinism or are merely attempts to form some sort of left-Sandinism—a Sandinism stripped of some of today's disgusting deals with Chamorro, but unable to repudiate the petty-bourgeois policy that led to up the current debacle.

At any event, if it would appear that the mass stirrings provide a broader field to encourage a thorough repudiation of petty-bourgeois Sandinism. And it raises even more strongly the need to train the workers in party consciousness, to show them the necessity to build up their own revolutionary, working class party. These, undoubtedly, are the tasks confronting the Marxist-Leninist Party of Nicaragua today.

### **A force to be reckoned with**

Comrades, it is quite possible that this particular strike wave may subside as quickly as it came. But, if nothing else, it demonstrates that the workers and exploited of Nicaragua are still a force to be reckoned with. Their poverty is already extreme and their exploitation will only

intensify under the new regime. Their struggle won't go away.

The important thing is that they build up their independent class organization. That is what they need to face up to the capitalist offensive of the Chamorro regime and the reformist treachery of the Sandinista leaders. That is what

they need to prepare for the next revolutionary tidal wave, so that next time the revolution will not be subordinated to the search for a miserable chicken-footed government. So that next time, the workers and exploited can themselves come to power and begin the work of creating a new world. ■

## Marxist-Leninist Party of Nicaragua (MAP-ML) on the new situation

Continued from the front page

proved in practice that the petty-bourgeois sector that became radicalized against Somoza finds itself today yielding to the interests of the counterrevolution.

This repositioning of the petty bourgeoisie has serious consequences in that this social sector, through the FSLN, took over state power, the government and the political leadership of the masses. This created conditions where all the sacrifice, heroism and effort made by the workers over these eleven years is today serving as basic accumulation for the bourgeoisie in its counterrevolutionary reconstruction and in the full installation of its class dictatorship.

At this particular moment in our history, it is necessary to take into account all the objective facts and with the greatest precision to discover the correlation which exists between the social classes and forces. Also to determine the peculiarities of the moment and find "by which objective facts, precisely established, must the Party of the Revolutionary Proletariat guide itself to determine the tasks and forms of action."

The electoral victory of the UNO, after five years of the definition of the Nicaraguan revolutionary process through the path of Sandinista institutionalization, and the political, military, diplomatic and economic siege by imperialism, is opening a new period. The proletariat and Marxist-Leninists must characterize and confront it in accordance with the objective and subjective conditions in the social development.

1. The Sandinista petty bourgeoisie during these ten years generated institutional, political and economic conditions which made possible the reorganization of the bourgeoisie, politically and economically.

2. With the insurrection of '79 the Nicaraguan proletariat succeeded in expropriating the Somocista fraction of the bourgeoisie and destroying the military apparatus of imperialist domination, without being able to build a political and military force of its own or affect the other part of the bourgeoisie.

3. The fraction of the bourgeoisie which led the UNO, and now the government, is the same one which in '79 allied itself with the FSLN to bring down the Somoza dictatorship and control the power and the possible revolutionary development and overflow of the masses.

4. The period which is opening is eminently counterrevolutionary in that the bourgeoisie will clearly exert its class dictatorship, dismantling all the popular gains and all the political space that the popular masses counted on.

5. The FSLN always kept in force the alliance and the program agreed on in 1979 with the bourgeois sector. Now the bourgeois-petty bourgeois alliance is developing with bourgeois hegemony.

6. The leading fraction of the UNO and the FSLN have agreed on yet another division of labor in the exercise of state power and the government. In this the FSLN will militarily guarantee the effective institutionalization, and to this end it will get the role of mediator between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. It will submit the proletariat to the global interests of capitalist development in Nicaragua.

7. The duality of military powers will tend to disappear to the extent that the Popular Sandinista Army orients itself in a definite way to be the permanent institution of the bourgeois-democratic regime. The armed contra is tending at first to assume paramilitary groups, but it will certainly be integrated into the power structures, and later on into the army.

8. In the short run, the UNO will not be able to fully push its economic program, because of lack of external resources and the necessity of guaranteeing the current agricultural cycle. The economic harmonization and the prolongation of the Sandinista economic adjustment plan will continue in place until the UNO succeeds in consolidating its power, and in integrating and assimilating the FSLN into the order and regime of bourgeois democracy.

9. The FSLN has raised the banner of critical collaborationism, supporting the good and criticizing the bad of the new government. The FSLN is calling on the masses to trust in the promises and alternatives of the bourgeoisie.

10. In sum, the new government is headed by a section

of the financier bourgeoisie, in alliance with a sector of the industrial bourgeoisie and another sector of the agricultural bourgeoisie.

This bourgeois alliance has made a social pact with the Sandinista petty bourgeoisie which has oriented all its forces to push a capitalist solution to the crisis.

The Nicaraguan state was institutionalized on the basis of political, juridical, and doctrinal principles of the bourgeoisie. The new government will protect in the most propitious way this institutionalization in service of the interests of the bourgeoisie and imperialism.

## II

11. The anti-worker policies, the class conciliation promoted by Sandinism will eliminate the vision that the masses had of the FSLN as revolutionary political leadership.

12. The popular masses have rejected the Sandinista program and their political leadership. This opens up a more direct presence of greater protagonism from the worker, peasant and popular sectors in the class conflicts.

13. The position of the working class and popular sectors is an offensive one in relation to the requirements of their immediate demands on the incoming government.

14. The possibility of the masses advancing in the development of their day-to-day struggles and policies necessarily presupposes the recovery of the leadership of their mass organizations—craft, union and community.

15. The recovery of the leadership of the mass movement and its mobilization independent from the sections in power is a fundamental condition for the political orientation of the fight.

16. The main effort of the CPT [union center friendly to the right-wing coalition of parties, and which includes the unions associated with the "Socialist" and "Communist" Parties of Nicaragua—ed.] and the CST [Sandinista union center], at this stage, will be to keep at a cringing and economist level the character of the mass and union struggles.

17. The masses' offensive for their demands will tend to supercede the purely economic plane in order to defeat the demobilizing trend in political terms.

18. The political mobilization of the masses is a fundamental condition to achieve the defense of sovereignty, self-determination, and to strengthen the anti-imperialist consciousness of the people.

19. The most explosive sector in this first period of the new government will be the popular sector. This is because of the high rate of unemployment, the gigantic growth of the informal sector, and mainly because of the cutbacks and high cost of social services.

20. In sum, the movement of the workers and masses will pass to the offensive in the course of pursuing their economic demands and certain immediate political demands.

## III

21. The armed forces of the counterrevolution, together with the Central American governments, imperialism, the petty-bourgeois sector, and the Somocistas of the UNO, will keep up the tactic of military pressure so that the negotiations will bring better fruits for the bourgeoisie.

22. The disarming of the contra [will give way after some time to negotiations, which will deal with] the Sandinista control of the Sandinista Popular Army.

23. The duality of military power will be maintained to guarantee the peaceful transition to and consolidation of the bourgeois government.

24. The conversion of the Sandinista Popular Army into the national, professional army, guarantor of bourgeois democracy, is the final objective of the negotiations.

25. The organization of the masses for the resistance and defense of their gains requires political mobilization and a leap in the limits of their demands.

26. The perspective for reinitiating an armed escalation, while remaining possible, is not very probable. Imperialism would not put at risk the political victory signified by the UNO victory, and instead lean on a defeated option [the contra war].

27. The military pressure will once again be a political weapon to extract diplomatic, political and military gains in the negotiations.

28. The masses have expressed, through the vote and their latest demonstrations, rejection of the military options, spectatorship, and an unconscious mass faith in the promises of the UNO, [which has] stagnated political action.

29. The FSLN as well as the pro-Violeta fraction appeal for conciliation, peaceful transition and harmony, with vain promises of prosperity, aimed at preventing the masses from assuming an active role in the struggle against the attempts of the armed contra to institutionalize itself as the military force of the new government.

30. Well-taught by the '79 insurrection, and by what it means to have a force of masses unfurled in insurrection, neither the UNO nor the FSLN are disposed to taking risks. The apparently insoluble contradiction over the army will certainly be negotiated in order to avoid a developing movement of the masses.

31. In sum, the leading force of the UNO has understood that it cannot govern without the FSLN taking on the role of mediator, and both of them preventing a revolutionary movement of the masses from ruining the counterrevolutionary accomplishments.

Imperialism is using military pressure to tame the FSLN still more, and achieve a better correlation of forces inside the EPS [Sandinista Popular Army]. War doesn't seem to be a real option for either of the two [the U.S. or FSLN]. The contra and the radical group in the UNO, which represents a commercial petty bourgeoisie of professionals, liberals and ex-Somocista guardsmen, has articulated its forces to pressure for them to be included in the

negotiations.

### Tactics

1. MAP-ML must develop a revolutionary opposition to the new government and its social-political pact with the Sandinista petty bourgeoisie.

2. The tactic or method to exercise the revolutionary opposition in this immediate period is to develop **Popular Unity** around the defense of the conquests and gains benefitting the people, that were extracted from Somoza and the Sandinistas. Fight for the organization and mobilization of the masses around their immediate demands.

3. The fundamental objective tactic for this period is to reconstitute the leadership of the workers, mass, and popular movement, to the end of winning its class independence. It's a case, then, of strengthening the craft, union and popular organizations, eradicating from them the conciliationist positions and practices in the face of the two fractions of power: UNO and FSLN.

4. Push forward revolutionary and class consciousness, developing a critical and clarifying effort in the face of the songs about "democracy", conciliation, peace and national unity being pushed by the bourgeoisie and the Sandinista petty bourgeoisie. In the same way, go against the practice of ideological diversionism and the offensive of promises and magical solutions, which try to eliminate the action and participation of the masses.

5. Keep up the offensive of the masses, adapting the methods of struggle to the degree of political mobilization and class independence of the craft, union, and mass

organizations.

6. Our tactic of Popular Unity must proceed with the Unity of Action of all the popular sectors who are demanding rights from the new government.

7. In this period, class solidarity is the guarantee of all struggle for demands and for the strengthening of the unions and the organizations of the masses.

8. The party, its organization, fronts and cells, must set specific fields of work to be able to convert themselves into organs of leadership of the masses. Our party, our cells, must lead the masses in their struggles, not substitute for them.

9. The work of cohesion of the natural leaders of the masses around conscious revolutionary proletarian positions must be the central axis of our propaganda and organizational work.

10. Organize and mobilize the masses, deepening their struggle for demands, always pushing more political actions which will allow the defeat of the political ebb and the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois influence on the masses, to pass over to the revolutionary political and proletarian offensive. This, in sum, will be our tactic in this immediate period.

To face without narrowness this new political turn, the Marxist-Leninist Party must immediately begin a process of ideological strengthening which will culminate in the formulation of its program and its Political Line, above all in reference to the content of a minimum program for the period, and the political and organizational strengthening of the party.

April, 1990 ■

## Correspondence:

# Why did the North Carolina State Patrol murder a former black mayor?

*The following comments were sent in by a reader. Sidney Bowen was mayor of Bolton from 1973-5. The election of black officials has not ended the racist oppression of the black people.*

"The first black mayor of Bolton, who was killed by a state trooper, had been severely beaten and shot at least four times—including once in the back of the head..."

That is what the newspapers had to say in early March about the murder of Sidney Bowen, a 42-year-old African-American in Bolton, Columbus County, North Carolina, at the hand of Alfred Morris, a North Carolina state trooper.

Now the same newspapers tell us that the Columbus County grand jury has refused to indict the murderer.

Imagine if the situation had been different, and an

African-American man had shot the state trooper four times and beat him on the head? The black man would have been lucky to have made it to the local jail alive, let alone made it to trial.

Killer cop Morris' boss, the State Patrol, gave him a pat on the back for the murder when they immediately cleared him of any wrongdoing. And now Columbus County's grand jury has given this police murder its official stamp of approval.

Black life isn't worth much, now is it?

It never has been in America, where blacks have always been the last hired, the first fired, the ones who have held the dirtiest, lowliest jobs in this 'free enterprise' society. Black life has never been worth much in eastern North Carolina, either. Eastern North Carolina is part of the old

plantation belt, the Black Belt, the area of the South where the Afro-American Nation developed. Police terror, educational mis-education and economic underdevelopment keep African-Americans in eastern North Carolina--and across the state--the victims of a modern-day slavery.

State trooper Morris shot Sidney Bowen at least four times, once in the back of the head, and severely beat him on his head with a weapon. All of this occurred one evening in early March after Bowen was driving and was stopped by Morris. Bowen's relatives watched from their house in horror. The police tried to justify this murder by saying that Bowen was intoxicated. So what?! Is that a reason for murder? (Maybe it is if the victim is black!) But

Bowen was the first African-American mayor of Bolton. He was respected by many.

Killer cops throughout the state must be happy. One of their brethren has, at least for now, been cleared of a controversial shooting. Some probably feel that now they, too, can kill a black and get away with it.

Don't we deserve to live in a society where blacks and workers can live free and not be shot down like dogs by the police? Why must we live in fear of the state troopers and the police departments? What can we do to ensure that Sidney Bowen did not die in vain? Those are the questions; it's time for some answers.

--March 19, 1990 ■

## The real chamber of horrors-- MBTA drug testing

*From the April 22 issue of Boston Worker, voice of the MLP-Boston:*

Three weeks ago a passenger was caught in the doors of an Orange Line train and dragged. Fortunately in this case the passenger was not injured. But the *Herald* made a big deal of it and even made a cartoon of the MBTA chamber of horrors featuring the dangerous doors. But the real chamber of horrors occurred at the MBTA drug testing clinic where the Orange Line guard was hauled off like a criminal for drug testing after the incident. There have been many rumors floating around the system as to what happened to this unfortunate worker at the hands of the drug testing bureaucracy. But what we report here is the story that the Orange Line Supervisor himself has been telling people.

The unfortunate Orange Line Guard was not only forced to submit to a urine test, but to also give a blood sample. The worker agreed to provide as much urine as the T wanted but he pleaded not to be stuck with a needle. He explained that he had a heart condition and that he was afraid of needles. But the callous drug testing bureaucrats forced him to give blood anyway. But as soon as they began to draw the blood the worker passed out. His heart stopped beating. (He went into a condition known as cardiac arrest, i.e. he had a heart attack.) Fortunately he was revived. But he spent the next 5 days in intensive care in the hospital.

The blood test is used only to check for the presence of alcohol. The Orange Line worker had no alcohol on his breath and there was no reason to believe that he was high on anything. (He came out clean as a whistle on all his tests). Nevertheless the T knowingly forced him to undergo tests that were a serious risk to his health. How cold can you get.

This incident shows once again that the drug testing

program launched by the T and the federal government is not intended to improve safety but to harass and intimidate the work force.

If the T really wanted to prevent draggings, it would put an extra guard on the 6-car trains on the Red and Orange Lines. There are many stations where the guard cannot see the doors on the end cars due to the curvature of the platform and must rely on convex mirrors which are frequently out of alignment. In addition the T would fix the door control design problems on the new Green Line cars and stop replacing recycling doors on the old LRV's with non-recycling arm and leg grabbers. (This latter move was so unsafe that the T's own engineers refused to sign the work order.) Real safety, of course, would cost a little more money and require a lot more management intelligence. And so the T would prefer to blame the operators and use drug testing and suspensions to harass them.

What has happened to our brother worker on the Orange Line shows the regime of harassment that is being built up under the guise of drug testing for safety. The T and other transit systems have been temporarily restrained from random testing of employees. But meanwhile they are getting around this by testing people who are anywhere near an accident. Even if there is no injury. Even if you weren't involved. A few weeks ago a bus driver with 19 years on the job was fired because she failed a drug test after her parked bus was hit by another bus in a station. The drug test said she was on heroin. Actually she had taken one of her father's pain killers for a toothache a few days earlier, not knowing that it contained morphine, and traces of that drug were still in her system. Still she remains fired.

Workers we must stand up to these atrocities. ... Step by step build up the united action that is necessary to defend our rights. ■