

A CRITIQUE OF ULTRA-LEFTISM,
DOGMATISM AND SECTARIANISM

Movement for a Revolutionary Left
Eugene, Oregon



This is a preliminary draft. Comments are
greatly appreciated. (January, 1977)

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A. General Introduction

The left in the U.S., and to a lesser extent in all the advanced capitalist countries, is in shambles. In some countries the Marxist parties are weak, e.g., the U.S.; West Germany, Britain, Scandinavia, the Netherlands, in such countries the major danger is ultra-leftism. In other countries, e.g., Spain, France, Italy, Finland, Japan, the Marxist parties are strong, here the major danger is reformism. The 1970's have seen a progressive deterioration of the left in both types of situations. The revisionism of the major Communist Parties in the advanced capitalist countries is becoming consolidated as they denounce the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat, enthusiastically support the progress of peaceful and gradual transition to socialism, give more and more guarantees to the capitalists and act to suppress militant worker's struggles (e.g., by supporting austerity programs, no strike pledges, etc.). The ultra-leftism of the Trotskyist groups which play a role in some European countries, e.g., France and Britain, and of the "Maoist" groups which are rather strong on what there is of the left in other countries, e.g., West Germany and Sweden, is also becoming consolidated in their increasing attacks on working class and progressive movements. The various "Maoist" grouplets have become increasingly sectarian and for the most part isolated from mass struggles, as they come to focus most of their energies on attacking each other and progressive movements. Most of the "Maoist" grouplets have come out in favor of NATO, opposed the Portuguese revolution, attack Cuba and the Angolan revolution, etc. The bankruptcy of both "revisionism" and "ultra-leftism" is rapidly becoming: apparent. There is a growing world wide movement of revolutionaries coming from different directions who are converging on a revolutionary politics that is neither reformist nor ultra-leftist. It is the purpose of this paper to help advance this trend, encouraging a coming together of (1) the forces on the left of the mainstream Communist parties in the advanced capitalist countries which are becoming increasingly disillusioned with the reformist course of their parties, (2) participants in the new "Maoist" movement, who are growing increasingly weary of sectarian battles, dogma and isolation and (3)

independent leftists and leftist organizations which are independently moving to an anti-reformist-anti-dogmatic conclusion. There are a number of organizations around the world that seem to more or less exemplify the general political position presented in this paper, and which can thus serve as inspirations for the type of organization to be built, and the types of strategies to be followed, by the U.S. left. The Chilean M.I.R.; the Party of Proletarian Unity for Communism (formed from a merger of the Il Manifesto group with a section of the Socialist Party for Proletarian Unity in 1974) and the Worker's Vanguard, both in Italy; the Puerto Rican Socialist Party (on the Island); and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) should tentatively be included among the organizations of this general perspective which have respectable mass followings.

In the United States groups like the Philadelphia Worker's Organizing Committee, the Bay Area Communist Union (except in its attitude towards Chinese foreign policy), the groups associated with the PWOC in its call for a national center of anti-revisionist/anti-dogmatic Marxist-Leninist groups, and the newspaper The Guardian would be included within the broad trend defended in this paper.

Among the existing socialist countries, the analysis of this paper is in essential agreement with the foreign policy followed by the People's Democratic Republic of Korea and Rumania, which should be looked to as the model of how to relate to the Soviet Union and China, and that of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and Cuba, which should be looked to as the model of how to relate to revolutionary movements in other countries (e.g., the heroic Cuban support of the liberation struggle in Angola, and the great assistance given by the Vietnamese to the liberation struggles in Cambodia and Laos).

The politics presented in this paper are mostly those established by the international movement at the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International in 1934 and are fundamentally out of sympathy with those of the "Third Period" of Comintern policy (1928-1934). China should be looked to as an inspiration (but not the model) of how the process of post-

revolutionary socialist transformation should proceed domestically in the advanced capitalist countries. However, it must be recognized that Soviet foreign policy in the 1970's has been more supportive of progressive struggles in the world than has that of China during the same period. The revolutionary movement in each country must establish its own analysis and strategy inspired, but not instructed by, the Soviet Union, China or any other world center. We can learn from all previous socialist revolutions, but we must not mechanically follow any.

This paper will attempt to develop a detailed critique of the danger facing the left in the United States—the interrelated problems of ultra-leftism, dogmatism and sectarianism which have paralyzed the successor groups to the Students for a Democratic Society in the 1970's. Much of the critique will focus on those groups which have grown the most and have had the greatest success during the first half of the 1970's and those that came to look to China for leadership.

Because this paper is a critique of “left errors” the problems of reformism, “revisionism” and “opportunism” will not be treated at any length, except in as much as is necessary to make the criticism clear. Further, neither a general analysis of the principle contradictions of monopoly capitalism, a defense of the revolutionary role of the working class, an argument for the need for a Marxist-Leninist Party, an all around program for a revolutionary party nor an exposition of the world historical importance of the Cultural Revolution and other great Chinese achievements in constructing socialism will be attempted. This paper is merely a critique of what has become the major danger on the U.S. revolutionary left. It is a call for sane revolutionary forces to come together, reverse our fratricidal direction and commence building a revolutionary movement in the US. that has a reasonable hope of winning the leadership of the working class within our lifetimes.

B. Historical Overview of the Left in the U.S.

The left errors currently predominant on the U.S. revolutionary left are by no means unique to the 1970's. Dogmatism, ultra-leftism and sectarianism have plagued the US. left throughout its history. The tradition was established by Daniel DeLeon and the Socialist Labor Party back in the 1880's and 1890's, when this party stood aside from the major popular struggles such as those of the Populists and the AFL unions, attempting to build a pure revolutionary organization with a pure Marxist line instead. The style and strategy developed by DeLeon are with the SLP and much of the rest of the US. Left to this day. "The SLP still refuses to support "reformist" struggles such as the civil rights movement, the demands of women, building trade unions, etc. It insists on one demand – Socialism Now, – and works with no one. The ultra-leftism-dogmatism-sectarianism of the SLP provoked a split in that party in 1900 and the founding of a new group, the Socialist Party, which freed of the left errors of DeLeon, grew rapidly, assuming the leadership of much of the working class movement. In 1912 it demonstrated its strength by Eugene Debs gaining over 6 percent of the vote cast for president. At this time socialists won office in local governments and published a great many popular papers and periodicals. The left errors became predominant once more in the immediate post World War I period, when not one, but three, communist parties were separately created, each highly antagonistic to the others. The three were forced together only by the insistence of the Comintern (which, by the way, called for the two IWW's, the SLP and the SP to merge into one Communist Party). Sectarian squabbling in the party was a major problem until the end of the 1920's. Ultra-leftism and dogmatism also plagued the new C.P. until the mid 1930's, and was manifested in refusal to support progressive farmer-labor party movements, attempts to set up separate revolutionary unions (esp. in the 1928-1934 period) and general isolation from the mainstream of the mass struggles in the U.S. The party did however lead many heroic struggles in the period, including many major strikes of the 1920's and the very important unemployed workers' movement in the early 1930's. It was not until after the Seventh Comintern Congress in 1934 that

the C.P.U.S.A. finally got itself together and became a major force within the US working class movement as well as in a wide range of progressive struggles within the U.S. It was in the period 1934-1947 that C.P. influence was at its peak in the working class and in progressive struggles generally. Party membership reached almost 100,000 in this period with millions passing through or close to its organization. The influence it exerted on turning people towards socialism and winning mass struggles was considerable during these years.

There was little that the C.P.U.S.A. could have done to maintain its strength and influence in the working class and among progressives in the 1947-1956 period. The forces of the most powerful ruling class in the world were too strong, and the roots of the Communist Party in the working class were too weak. It was inevitable that Communist influence would be pretty much entirely weeded out of the unions, mass organizations and schools. The strength of the U.S. ruling class is to be found in the economic and military might of the U.S.A. which emerged from World War II as the hegemonic power in the world – there was nothing the revolutionary left could have done that could have significantly affected this. The weakness of the C.P.U.S.A. was caused by the special conditions of the U.S.: a working class composed of highly diverse ethnic groups which can easily become antagonistic to itself, the rapid rate of growth in the living standard of American workers and the victory of the U.S. in both World War I and World War II which stirred up and cemented patriotic pride in the working class (while the U.S. was almost alone spared the emotional and economic costs of warfare). No strategy followed by the CP in the 1930's and 1940's could have resulted in a firm rooting in the U.S. working class, nor put the party in a much better position to conserve its strength, analysis and organization through the period of repression. The collapse of the C.P.U.S.A. which occurred in the 1950's was a product of objective conditions and could not have been avoided. Many were those that stuck with the party through the worst of the repression, in good part only because of their faith in the correctness of its line, rather than because it was leading struggles, who in 1956 lost faith and left the party. Khrushchev's attack on Stalin and the

Soviet invasion of Hungary, as interpreted by the U.S. press, proved to be major blows at people whose faith in the rightness of the Soviet Union and the cause it was behind could be shattered by the lack of a continuing material basis for their party membership. Since the masses of people in the U.S. rejected Communists instead of accepting their leadership, political work became virtually impossible.

Faced with overwhelming repression from above, and demoralizing defection in the ranks, the party wavered, at first attempting a reformist and independent line in 1957 in order to meet the demands of the rank and file disillusioned with Soviet policies, and then shortly thereafter reversing course, it moved to the position it holds to this day – mechanical defense of the Soviet Union, working in the most inconspicuous manner within reformist mass organizations and movements (such as the Miller campaign/the peace movement, etc.), and demonstrating a low level of both energy and discipline. The repression against Communists in the 1950's was so pervasive and thorough that members of the party almost universally adopted the tactic of crawling up inside of their shells to protect themselves. Denying that they were Communists became second nature and its corollary of not taking public stands in support of Communist analyses and goals necessarily followed. Communists became invisible and as a result ineffective. The defensive protective reaction combined with removal from positions of influence in mass organizations de-energized people. What remained of the Party by the late 1950's had turned into a ghost of its former self. A Communist Party in name only. Although it continues to give abstract adherence to the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat and refuses to renounce the possibility of revolutionary violence, in practice, the C.P.U.S.A. has become a thoroughly reformist (or center social democratic) party in its practice, analysis, strategies, mass work, organizational discipline and the level of energy its cadres give to party work.

In the late 1950's a number of revolutionaries within the party were either expelled or voluntary left in reaction to the dissipation of revolutionary energy and direction. Some of the first set of defectors from the party

formed into a group calling itself the Provisional Organizing Committee – within a short time this grouping disintegrated into ultra-leftism and sectarianism without even beginning to play a role in mass struggles or establish roots in the working class. Around 1960 a second set of leftists within the party left or were expelled. These people founded the Progressive Labor Movement which within a few years changed its name to the Progressive Labor Party. The PLP identified with the Chinese critique of the Soviet Union and of the pro-Moscow parties (such as that of the U. S.), actively supported the Cuban Revolution and the Vietnamese war of national liberation, and because of its militant activities and its Leninist analysis became an important force in the student movement in the period 1965-1968. However, ultra-leftism, dogmatism and sectarianism became predominant in the PLP at the very time of the growth in its influence. Thus the PLP came to attack progressive movements among minorities such as the Black Panthers and the majority leadership of SDS. (through organizational maneuvering they took over SDS in 1969). At the same time PLP denounced the Cuban revolution, shortly thereafter the Chinese (they sided with the ultra-left in the Cultural Revolution), and finally the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam. Following a rule or ruin policy of relating to other revolutionary and progressive organizations, isolated from all progressive and revolutionary forces internationally and domestically, PLP very soon sunk into irrelevance (no different from a Trotskyist sect) claiming to be the only true revolutionaries in the world.

Out of the mainstream of SDS emerged a tendency hostile both to the PLP's dogmatism, sectarianism and ultra-leftism and to the crazy adventurism of the Weather-people and their sympathizers. The so called Revolutionary Youth Movement-II tendency included the leading cadre of what were to become both the Revolutionary Union and the October League. The unity of RYM-II included support of Marxism-Leninism, seeing the centrality of working class struggles, the necessity of working with progressive and revolutionary groups in the women's and Third World movements in the U.S., on giving' unconditional support to Third World liberation movements overseas, and avoiding adventurist actions. The

RYM-II tendency held to the late SDS policy of looking to China, Cuba and Vietnam as sources of inspiration while adopting the PLP policy of focusing organizational efforts on the working class. The most important organization to emerge directly out of RYM-II tendency was the Revolutionary Union. Founded while SDS still existed as the Bay Area Radical Union it came to include a few ex-members of the C.P., but consisted almost entirely of students and, ex-students radicalized in the struggles of the 1960's who were increasingly seeing the need for revolutionary struggle in the U.S., and who were increasingly coming to understand what being a Marxist-Leninist meant. There were two major tendencies within the RU (which until around 1971 remained a West Coast organization) a tendency similar to that of the Weatherpeople that tended to support guerrilla warfare and terrorism and to reject the mainstream of the working class as not revolutionary, instead glorifying Third World struggles, and the tendency which was rapidly moving to an orthodox Leninist analysis and line of the Third Period variety. In 1971 those that supported the first tendency split and formed themselves into Venceremos. In 1973 Venceremos itself split into two factions on the question of guerrilla warfare vs. organizing among the most oppressed segments of the working class. The mainstream of the R.U. meanwhile became a national organization establishing itself as the leading supporter of the People's Republic of China as well as the most promising and energetic revolutionary organization in the U.S. The R.U. in 1973 began actively pushing for the unity of various revolutionary forces into a single communist organization and opened up negotiations with a wide range of groups for this purpose. However, in the course of 1973-1975 the R.U. became increasingly ultra-leftist, dogmatic and sectarian, isolating itself from virtually all revolutionary and progressive forces especially in the Third World movement in the process, until finally in October 1975 it unilaterally declared itself to be the party of the working class. In 1975-1976 it publicly denounced Cuba, stood aloof from the Portuguese revolution, and attacked the revolutionary movement in Angola.

If the ultra-left, sectarian and dogmatic tendencies in the RCP become fully

consolidated, and especially if the tendency to distance themselves from the Chinese becomes predominant the October League will probably eclipse it in the U.S. in the short run. The O.L. has been (1) somewhat less sectarian than the R.C.P., working with many progressive and revolutionary groups and tendencies that the RCP attacks, especially among Third "World" people. Its work style is also a less arrogant and sectarian than that of the RCP. (2) The OL has tended to be somewhat less ultra-leftist than the RCP and more willing to support progressive struggles and united fronts. However, in 1976 this tendency seems to have been reversed with the OL becoming more hostile than even the RCP towards working with progressive movements such as that of Sadlowski in the USW and refusing to participate in actions which include the "revisionist" CP. (3) The OL is considerably more dogmatic than the RCP and mechanically follows the Chinese in everything, doing no independent analysis of their own. In some ways this is a great weakness; but to the extent that the Chinese are a revolutionary force in the world (and especially to the extent that China corrects the errors of its foreign policy) it is a great strength. If the RCP consolidates its left errors and especially if it becomes critical of the current Chinese leadership the OL will pick up many members from people around the RCP as well as many people recruited into the movement because of identification with China, and who are looking for some kind of a revolutionary organization to join. However, because the left error is part of the OL constitution, they will be doomed to go the way of the previous ultra-leftist splinters. Ultra-leftism, whether in the PLP, RCP or OL varieties is as bankrupt as the ultra-leftism of the 1930's and 1940's – Trotskyism. The road of all ultra-leftist grouplets is essentially the same. Trotsky paved it in the 1920's and 1930's and many are those that have followed it since – it leads to irrelevance, isolation and impotence, its terminus is the dust bin of history.

C. An Analysis of the Current Trends on the U.S. Left

1. The Bankruptcy of “Maoism” in the Advanced Capitalist Countries

The term “Marxist-Leninism Mao-Tse-Tung Thought” refers to the ideas expressed in the four Volumes of Mao Tse-tung’s Selected Works, the ideas in the Little Red Book and in the one volume Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Tse-tung about making revolution and constructing socialism. These ideas are both profound and a most important contribution to the Marxist-Leninist tradition. The term “Maoism” is used by everyone except the most orthodox followers of the leadership of the Communist Party of Chinese to describe those that look to the Chinese for political leadership, e.g., by the Soviets, the late 1960’s, S.D.S., the Monthly Review (which has included itself in the ranks of “Maoists”), mainstream liberals, and most generally pro-China people and radicals (who use the term favorably). It is this usage of “Maoism” that is employed in this paper. There is no necessary relationship between “Marxism-Leninism Mao Tse-tung Thought” and “Maoism.” While in the 1960’s the two closely intertwined this has become considerably less so in the 1970’s as Chinese foreign policy has become less supportive of revolution, more hostile to the Soviet Union and less opposed to U.S. imperialism. The critique of “Maoism” in the advanced capitalist countries is thus meant to refer to the tailing of the Chinese Communist Party, especially in its foreign policies, and not to the ideas of Mao Tse-tung about making revolution and constructing socialism.

As the international line of the Soviet Union mellowed somewhat during the 1950’s, i.e., became more supportive of progressive, nationalist and reformist trends in both Europe and the Third World pushing less actively for rapid social revolution and as the line of most of the Communist Parties of the world did likewise, the left wing both inside, and outside of the Communist Parties became increasingly discontented. In country after country they left or were expelled from the Communist Parties (and in a few cases China, Albania, Burma, Malaysia and Thailand) won leadership.

The forces opposed to the dominant reformist trend in the major communist parties and the Soviet Union tended to be composed of both honest revolutionary forces discouraged by the reformist trends and ultra-left dogmatic forces which would have been discouraged by anything. In the United States both the first attempt to form an organization outside of the Communist Party – The provisional Organizing Committee, and the second, the Progressive Labor Party, soon after their formation revealed themselves to be in essence trotskyist-like groups who came to feel no one in the world, not even China; was revolutionary enough for them. The third attempt, the Revolutionary Communist Party, seems to be heading down the same road. Without fraternal relations with other “Maoist” groups in Europe or elsewhere (which it tends to condemn as class collaborationists) and with its increasing isolation from movements of national minorities (which it condemns as “Bundist”) the objective difference between the PLP and the RCP is rapidly diminishing. The tiny pro-Chinese grouplets in the U.S. and Europe find themselves in a similar situation – in the advanced stages of disintegration into mutually hostile and equally irrelevant sects whose main difference with traditional trotskyists is in their position on China and Albania. “Maoism” (i.e., the tailing of the Chinese Communist Party) in the 1960’s was clearly and unambiguously to the left of the major and pro-Soviet Communist Parties, defining itself as supportive of rapid revolutionary transformations and unafraid of armed struggle. The “Maoism” of the 1970’s has come to mean something quite different. During the Cultural Revolution the Chinese analysis of the Soviet Union and its role in the world changed from merely arguing that it was revisionist and insufficiently supportive of revolutionary struggles to a novel analysis that it was both a capitalist and imperialist country which represented at least as much a threat to the world’s peoples as did the U.S. The Chinese thus came to support a world movement against “the two super powers” of which the Soviet Union seems to be in practice the greater danger, both because it is the ascendant power and because it pretends to be a friend of the world’s people. China then began supporting, or at least ceasing to attack, such reactionary but anti-Soviet regimes as those of the Shah of Iran, Pinochet’s in Chile and Marco’s in the Philippines, as well as the NATO

alliance in Europe, because they were all enemies of the Soviet Union. The various Maoist groups around the world, which had developed on the basis of wanting a sharper attack on their own ruling classes, were thus turned around to in many cases supporting their own ruling classes, who were focusing their attacks on the Soviet Union and its alleged agent, the local Communist Parties. Groups which had only a few years previously split from the orthodox communist parties because they did not adequately support revolution, found themselves condemning the Cuban revolution, the Portuguese Revolution and the Angolan Revolution, and not supporting the struggles of the Chilean people or Omani people because they were led by organizations which refused to condemn the Soviet Union. Maoist groups in Europe mobilized in defense of the NATO alliance that had been set up to prevent working class revolution in their countries in order to protect their bourgeoisies against a threat from the Soviet Union. Alliances between Maoists and right wing social democrats, traditionally the most hostile to Communists and working class revolution, blossomed in such countries as Portugal. The total reversal of the thrust of Maoism and the bankruptcy of replacing mechanical acceptance of Soviet leadership with the mechanical acceptance of Chinese leadership became increasingly clear to key forces like the Guardian in the United States.

In the 1970's Maoism thus came to mean nothing other than mechanically accepting whatever the Chinese Communist leadership said, whether it led to policies to the left or to the right of those of the major Communist parties. The essence of Maoism became clear to many during the struggles of the MPLA in Angola when the Cubans heroically came to their aid, while the Maoist groups did their best to undermine the struggle.

Maoist groups have been as internally divided and as sectarian as the Trotskyist groups with which they differ principally only on the question of whether or not China and Albania are really socialist countries. (The struggles in the Philippines waged by the New People's Army and in Thailand, Burma and Malaysia which are also led by pro-Chinese Communist parties are the other exceptions.) As in the case of the traditional Trotskyist grouplets, the Maoist grouplet's problems stem from

the essential, dogmatism and rationalism of their method at arriving at analyses and strategies combined with their isolation from mass struggles (outside of countries where they do have mass roots: Burma, Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines). One of the major issues that divide Maoists is on what the real Chinese position is (say on Iran, Nato, the two super powers, etc.). They also divide on how to relate to national minorities, trade unions, and a wide range of other topics which have been the traditional points of issue on the left in the twentieth century. But, as with the Trotskyists, their method of resolving differences is not democratic-centralism, unified practice, sum up and criticism/self criticism and reformulation of policy, but rather one of dogmatic sterile intellectual debate, persuasion and badgering, and splitting off to build another group with the "correct line." The Maoist left outside of Southeast Asia is thus as fractured, sectarian and irrelevant as the classical Trotskyist left, although because of the youth of their membership, they often have more energy than many of the Trotskyist groupings.

One of the most important developments of all in the key 1974-1975 period for Maoism in the U.S. was the opposition of the Guardian to the Maoist policy in Portugal, Angola and Cuba. This caused the Guardian in 1975 to be excluded from most China oriented bookstores and to be "excommunicated" from the orthodox Maoist movement. The parallel evolution of the PWOC and other pro-China, but non-Maoist groups during 1975-1976, and the current attempt to build a national center of such organizations is also most significant.

While the C.L.P. and the non-dogmatist current left or were pushed out of the Maoist movement, there has been a consolidation of the hard core that remained, each in their separate shell, but each, except for the R.C.P. which keeps its minor reservations, equally dogmatic in its competition for the mantle of Maoist orthodoxy. Since 1974 the formerly pro-Chinese Movement has basically divided into two parts. Those that now fully understand and accept the details of Chinese analysis and policies – these can now properly be called "Maoists"; and the anti-dogmatic/anti-revisionist trend which has been ex-communicated by the mutual consent

of all orthodox Maoists. This later trend pretty much continues the attitude of the pre-1973 pro-Chinese movement – support of all revolutionary struggles – including Cuba, the MPLA progressive nationalism and feminism,; etc. It is important to note that it is the new consolidated orthodox Maoist tendency (from which only the RCP stays one step to the side) that has changed during the mid-1970's, while the people around the Guardian, PWOC, BACU, etc., continue to hold the general line of pre-1973 "Maoists" in the U.S., i.e., a far less dogmatic and sectarian politics.

In 1973 it was still possible for there to be serious and comradely discussions between the Guardian, OL, RCP, BWC, CLP, et al., about unification of the revolutionary left. Before 1973 issues of Chinese foreign policy did not play a central role among pro-Chinese communist forces in the U.S. We all supported the Cuban revolution and saw no conflict with giving full support to China; we all gave support to all progressive and revolutionary, struggles in Asia, Africa and Latin America (e.g., one of the two conditions of unity of the RU's Attica Brigade and the RSB during its first two years was support of all revolutionary struggles); all opposed the European capitalist class as the primary enemy of European workers. Being a "Maoist" until 1973 mostly meant that we supported revolutionary struggles wherever they occurred and opposed the reformism of the Soviet Union and the CPUSA. Although we all felt that there was something seriously defective about the Soviet Union, few of us really believed that it was capitalism of the Nazi type or a major danger to the world's people. A turning point in the development of Maoism in the west occurred in 1974-1975. We were now called on to do far more than ever before, we were asked to consider the Soviet Union to be as bad if not worse than the U.S., to attack revolutionary regimes which were close to the Soviet Union such as Cuba, and oppose revolutionary struggles such as that of the MPLA because they accepted Soviet aid. At the same time we disintegrated into tiny warring sects as nasty to each other and as removed from practice as Trotskyists, as each in turn declared themselves to be THE PARTY, reading, the rest of us out of the legitimate revolutionary movement. Reasoned analyses gave way to dogmatic polemics full of quotes designed to prove

that one's opponents, were revisionists/ opportunists, etc. Only the RCP among the mainstream groups continued to do any real thinking at all, and its thinking led it increasingly to the same conclusions as the Trotskyists.

The Maoist movement in the West glorifies in maintaining that most of the world communist movement went revisionist, and betrayed the revolutionary line of Stalin between 1953 and 1956 (although many maintain that the roots of this revisionism were laid during the 1930's). In fact, although there have been differences both domestically in the Soviet Union (mainly in the direction of increasing worker's participation, equality and all around democratic life) and internationally (mainly in various degrees of support for non-revolutionary-regimes in the Third World, and greater efforts for disarmament and peace) the shifts in line in the 1950's were relatively minor compared to those which took place in the mid-1930's. Perhaps because of the youth of most of its adherents, Maoism often confuses the changes made at the 7th Comintern Congress held in 1934 which ended the ultra-left "third period" line established at the 6th Congress in 1928, with alleged changes made after the death of Stalin. In fact there is great continuity in the international communist movement in its general analyses, strategies and attitudes towards classes and organizations since 1934 when the radical break was made with previous theory and practice. The list of the errors of revisionism reads far more like a "third period" critique of the Seventh Comintern Congress, which took place in the height of the hegemony of Stalin's leadership and bears the distinctive mark of his politics, than a defense of Stalin and revolution against the post-1953-1956 policies of the Soviet Union which have in fact not differed qualitatively from the positions laid down in 1934. (The Parties in France, Japan, Italy and Spain however do now differ qualitatively as they have consolidated their revisionism).

It is mistakenly argued by those that try to show that they are orthodox Communists, in the tradition of Stalin and the Comintern, to dismiss the positions of the 7th Comintern Congress as merely a temporary strategic retreat made necessary by the requirements of stopping fascism. According to this contemporary interpretation the idea of the United

Front/Popular Front was merely a defensive strategy designed to save democratic freedoms from fascism. In fact, the positions of the 7th Comintern Congress developed an aggressive strategy designed to make socialist revolution. Both the Soviets and the Chinese have diverged a bit from the 7th Comintern statements, but neither very greatly. In the 1960's the Chinese moved a bit towards seeing the world situations, especially in the Third World, as more revolutionary than previously without rejecting the United Front/Popular Front notions of an alliance of four classes and a two stage theory of revolution, while the Soviets moved a bit in the direction of downplaying the immediacy of revolutionary crisis and overestimating the probability that progressive petty bourgeois radical regimes would follow in the footsteps of the Cuban 26th of July Movement and develop into authentic socialist revolutions. However, in the 1970's the Soviets came increasingly to support national liberation and anti-imperialist movements whether or not they were led by Communists. While the Chinese in the 1970's outdid the Soviet's 1960's policy of supporting non-Revolutionary Third World regimes (including even the most reactionary such as Iran and Chile) in the name of Third World unity and opposing the "two superpowers."

The popularity of Maoism in the advanced capitalist countries is in part based on the prevalent anti-Communism which younger petty bourgeois people took in with their mother's milk. Virtually all petty bourgeois children throughout Europe, Japan, Australia and the U.S., and most working class people in the U.S., West Germany and a few other countries, have suffered one of the most invidious propaganda campaigns of modern times against the Soviet Union and Communism (which in the presentations of the ruling class media and education are one and the same). Images of slave labor, concentration camps, police terror, arbitrary dictators, dull conformity, lack of basic freedoms, food rationing, aggressive foreign policies designed to enslave the world, etc. – in short Nazi Germany rearmed – have been drummed into our heads as youth. This is the unchallenged conception of both Communism and the Soviet Union which we almost all grow up with.

The new left movement of the 1960's grew up independently of the Marxist

-Leninist tradition. Its roots were in the pacifist and social democratic tradition. It moved to Marxism-Leninism because of identification with the struggles of the Cubans, Vietnamese and Chinese (during their Cultural Revolution). The characteristics of these three revolutions did not seem to us to have anything in common with the image of Communism/Soviet Union that we had been conditioned to accept, and thus we became strongly predisposed to a Maoist type argument that the Soviet Union's brand of "Communism" really was a capitalist of the Nazi type, i.e., what we had believed all along, while the "Communism" of China, Cuba and Vietnam was a qualitatively different phenomenon – people's power, or the realization of the true; socialist ideas of equalitarianism, democracy and control of production by the common people. The Maoist alternative allowed formerly strongly anti-communist youth to easily make the transition to Marxism without having to, question the fabricated stereotype of Soviet communism they had grown up with, while romanticizing Cuban, Vietnamese and Chinese Communism, portraying the two types as having nothing in common. At no point were the great majority of U.S. Marxists ever sympathetic to the Soviet Union, This appeal to petty bourgeois youth is identical to the appeal of Trotskyism, for Trotskyism too, offers the possibility of having your cake and eating it to. Maoism in the advanced capitalist countries, as does Trotskyism, idealizes and romanticizes the revolutionary process and revolutionary societies, both fail to appreciate the twists and turns, compromises/strategic retreats, mistakes, and patience inherent in the revolutionary process in the real world. Both thus tend to condemn processes and regimes which are unable to live up to unrealistic ideals, and both then tend to become objectively anti-revolutionary forces opposing rather than supporting progressive and revolutionary process which are doing the best they are able in a complex world. To be a Marxist-Leninist is to appreciate the grave problems faced by the Soviet Union in its first thirty years and to understand, that the policies followed to build socialism under such nearly impossible conditions, necessarily produces a distorted form of socialism. And further to understand that there was no realistic possibility that much more could be hoped for, and that in spite of all problems great world shattering

contributions to the revolutionization of the world were achieved by the Soviet's during these years. It is to understand that the vicious anti-Communist propaganda that the ruling class will necessarily put out (which may or may not have, a kernel of truth) about any socialist country which is threatening it, and honestly and forthrightly reject any inherent internalized prejudices, refusing to let them color our current perceptions, and above all refuse to pander to popular anti-communism when winning people to Marxists-Leninist politics.

A second source of the anti-Sovietism of the Maoists in the advanced capitalist countries lies in the bitter personal experience of a few of the older comrades who were in the Party in the 1950's, became disillusioned with Khrushchev's report on Stalin and, instead of accepting the accusations and becoming critical of the party's practice from the right, became critical of Khrushchev, all the more defensive of Stalin, and saw in the developing Chinese position a justification for holding to their romanticized views of how perfect things were in the Soviet Union before 1953. Again the process of romanticization and idealization characteristic of Trotskyism, and the lack of appreciation for necessary compromise played a key role. Refusing to be shaken in their faith in the perfection of Stalin's Soviet Union these dogmatists merely transferred their vision of Socialist utopia from the Soviet Union to China, now holding that Chinese society and Chinese foreign policy were as perfect as had been those of Stalin's. The corollary of this transfer of faith is the thesis that capitalism was restored in the Soviet Union in the 1950's and that Soviet foreign policy changed from being revolutionary to imperialist in the same time period (accusations that have no substantiation in fact).

The lesson to be learned from the experience with Stalin's infallibility and the idolization of the Soviet Union in the period 1930's-1953 was neither that the critiques of Stalin were right and that the USSR and its foreign policies were betrayals of socialism, nor that they were perfect and the model for all other parties to follow. The real lesson is that the world Marxist-Leninist movement can not fall into the Trotskyist error of idealization and romantization, and its corollary of bitter denunciation when

reality can not meet the ideals, and that the world movement can not have a single Church and Pope which knows what everyone must do and to which we look to as the model. Peking can not replace Moscow, nor should Moscow be transformed from Rome to anti-Rome. The experience should have taught us the necessity to think for ourselves, to place the interests of no state above a revolutionary policy, to understand the need for revolutionary patience, and to appreciate the curves in the road to revolution and the necessity of supporting, but not tailing, all progressive struggles and socialist regimes.

2. What Trotskyism Means

An idealist definition of a “trotskyist” would focus on whether or not an individual or group like Leon Trotsky, read his work with respect and sided with Trotsky over Stalin in the 1920’s and 1930’s. A materialist definition of a “trotskyist” on the other hand would ask rather whether or not a group acted essentially like Trotsky acted and if its strategy was essentially like that of Trotsky, i.e., was objectively “Trotskyite”. Taking a materialist approach one would be considered a trotskyist if one acting like Trotsky even if one liked Stalin and hated Trotsky, while conversely one would not be considered a trotskyist if one did not acted like Trotsky and have a strategy like that of Trotsky, even if one liked Trotsky, read his works, etc. In EXamining various groups and currents we must be very careful to always use a materialist definition, and not be confused by verbal disclaimers, genealogies or posters on people’s walls.

The essence of what the Marxist-Leninist tradition including Stalin, Mao, Fidel and Ho Chi Minh have meant by “trotskyism” is a left-adventurist and dogmatic analysis which condemns all existing socialist countries and people’s democracies as not really socialist, being run by bureaucrats or perhaps state capitalists acting against the interests of the working people, and which likewise condemns all massive popular, progressive, or Communist led movements as being insufficiently revolutionary or in the process of selling out the masses in the interests of a bureaucracy, either

local or located in the USSR, China, etc. Trotskyism differs from the anarchists who make similar claims about all progressive and socialist movements and regimes by claiming adherence to the principles of Leninism, endorsing the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and organizing themselves more or less according to Leninist principles. This is the essence of trotskyism and the sole criteria by which a group or current should be categorized as “trotskyist.” Applying this criteria to groups like the Progressive Labor Party in the U.S. which condemn China, the USSR, Cuba and all progressive and socialist regimes as well as the CPUSA, RCP, CL, SWP and all other groups in the U.S., all progressive, socialist or national liberation movements in Third World countries, and all progressive and Communist lead movements in the advanced capitalist countries, as selling out the masses, tools of the Soviet or Chinese bureaucracies etc., are pure trotskyist groups. PLP sees itself as the only truly revolutionary group in the world. On the other hand a splinter group from the Socialist Workers Party (the main Trotskyist group in the U.S.), the Workers World Party and its youth group Youth Against War and Fascism, gives basic support to Third World national liberation movements and socialist regimes such as those of the Cubans, Vietnamese, Angolans, etc., and (at least at last look) considered China and other socialist countries to be socialist. Thus in spite of their positive attitude about Leon Trotsky they can not be considered to be “trotskyists.”

A secondary but central characteristic of “trotskyism” is its historical position on the role of the working class, national bourgeoisies and nationalism in general in the revolutionary struggle, especially in Third World countries, but also in Third World communities in the advanced capitalist countries. Trotsky’s position, generally adopted by trotskyist groups is that the working class is the principle revolutionary force in Third World countries as well as in the advanced countries and that both nationalism and the national bourgeoisie are necessarily reactionary forces. The position developed by the Comintern in the 1920’s and endorsed by both Soviet and Chinese Communists is that nationalism is often a progressive force in Third World countries and should be utilized to

mobilize the masses of people to get rid of imperialism and begin a popular democratic (“new democratic”) revolution and further that the local capitalists who are oppressed by foreign imperialism can be allied with (but with the working class and peasantry playing the leading role in this alliance) in getting rid of imperialism. Once again the position of the PLP is identical to the classical trotskyist position on this question, while that of the WWF-YAWF is in conflict.

In general “trotskyism” is characterized by a dogmatic or rationalist theory of knowledge, inflexibility in strategy and tactics, hyper sectarianism in relations to other groups and overbearingness in their style of work. Rather than developing their theory and strategy through the dialectic of theory and practice in the manner described so well by Mao-Tse-tung’s On Practice, trotskyists read Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, or Stalin as a monk would read the Bible (as sacred dogma) then use it to criticize the inadequacies in the world, specifically the imperfect nature of various socialist countries and movements and the backwardness of the peasants, workers, and other progressive forces which do not live up to what they think Marx, Lenin, Trotsky or Stalin said about them. If countries and movements and classes do not live up to the ideal standards of Trotsky than so much the worse for them.

Trotskyists almost never learn from practice, their strategies and tactics almost never change as a result of trial and error and sum up. Instead changes in their positions occur through intellectualist dogmatic debate of the order of who is really loyal to the true Fourth International (or to the Third), who really has the correct interpretation of what Leon Trotsky (or Stalin) really really meant. Because of the rationalism of their theory of knowledge and the corresponding lack of and often disdain for practice trotskyist groups constantly split into ever smaller groups all of which maintain hostile relations with all other trotskyist groups. The idea that correct thought, rather than current practice, will decide the issues dividing them is pervasive. Trotskyites often focus most of their energy on fighting each other rather than on actually organizing the working class. Because of their frequent obsession with ideological conversion, rather than with,

mass struggles, trotskyists are often most overbearing in their attempts to badger people into endorsing their various lines. Out of fairness it must be noted that not all trotskyists groups share equally in this later categorizations, and hence that they are not defining characteristics of trotskyism. For example, the Socialist Workers Party works in many mass struggles (although some would argue only in order to recruit members) and the International Socialists seem to be rooted in the working class (if only because many of their former student members have taken factory jobs). The most prominent examples of pure trotskyist groups in the U.S. are the Spartacus League and the Progressive Labor Party.

3. Social Democracy

The term social democracy covers a broad range of tendencies. What they have in common seems to be opposition to the Leninist conception of the party and either complete disagreement with watering down, or at least downplaying of the central role of the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Some social democrats are truly socialists who fully understand the class nature of capitalist society and have a full vision of socialism, others accept capitalist institutions and are concerned mainly with increasing the power of unions and expanding social welfare. Social Democrats can best be broken up into three rather distinct groups; right social democrats such as the European Social Democratic parties (e.g., Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Germany, the British Labor Party, etc.) and the American Social Democrats who endorse George Meany, Hubert Humphrey, Patrick Moynihan, Albert Shanker and the U.S. side in the Vietnamese war; center social democrats such as the Italian Socialist Party and the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee in the U.S. (with which Michael Harrington is associated) and the James Weinstein current in the New American Movement and the paper *In These Times*, and left social democrats (such as the contemporary followers of Rosa Luxemburg and Antonio Gramsci).

The right social democrats have nothing in common with Marxism except

their ancient history and are equivalent to liberal democrats in the U.S. The major point of differentiation between right social democrats and liberal democrats is the especially vicious anti-communism of the former, derivative from the bitter struggles in the labor movement which they have often lost to the Communists. Center Social Democrats, while honestly believing in some kind of socialist alternative to capitalism reject the notion of the dictatorship of the proletariat and see a socialist transformation coming about gradually, without the need for military hegemony, through electoral and parliamentary processes. Their organizational forms are loose and they see no need for a cadre party. They too are often anti-communist, although they sometimes ally with Communists. Left Social Democrats share the Communist vision but differ from Communists principally in rejecting the necessity for a Leninist Party and in downplaying or neglecting the importance of the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Left Social Democrats will usually admit when questioned that the revolutionary transformation will probably come down to a military struggle, but do not generally see this as an eventuality that should now be prepared for or emphasized in propaganda. They further see the post revolutionary period as a rather easy and not very dictatorial time in which a wide range of opinions and organizations will co-exist (in this respect their position is somewhat intermediate between those of the anarchists and Leninists). In place of a Leninist party they substitute a considerably looser mass organization which can probably coexist in leading the revolutionary struggle with other revolutionary organizations. Left social democrats, like Leninists, participate in the battle for reforms and like Leninists they do not believe that a gradual process of reforms focusing on parliamentary and electoral battles without acquiring military hegemony can produce a socialist revolution. Unlike center social democrats, they are not reformists.

Left-social democracy was a leading revolutionary current in Europe before the Russian Revolution (its principle figure and still leading theoretician being Rosa Luxemburg). The great success of Bolshevism in making revolution and building revolutionary movements almost drove left-social democracy from the arena of revolutionary Marxism. There has been a

minor revival of left social democracy in the 1960's in the advanced capitalist countries because of disillusionment with the Soviet Union, but it seems not to have acquired much of a mass base except perhaps in Australia (with the Communist Party). Some of the trends in the New American Movement and in similar organizations are generally left-social democratic, but not as yet fully consolidated. NAM also has strong center social-democratic, anarchist-syndicalist, and even Leninist tendencies as well. Given the proven superiority of Leninism, left-social democracy does not appear to have much of a future other than to help revitalize certain strategic and tactical notions of people like Luxemburg and Gramsci (to the benefit of the Leninist led working class movement).

The right social democratic trend does not appear to have any distinctive future either, since it no longer has any *raison d'être* separate from the Democratic Party in the U.S. The sole reason for maintaining a social democratic identity in Europe is to hold working class support by a symbolic attachment to class struggle. No such symbolic function is served in the U.S., so right social democracy can be expected to remain moribund. It might be mentioned that there are center social democratic tendencies in many of the European Social Democratic Parties which have some potential for breaking off and establishing separate trends, e.g., the youth group of the German SPD, the section of the Swedish Social Democrats pushing for worker's ownership of industry, the left wing of the British Labor Party, an important segment of the French Socialist Party, etc.

Central social democracy does appear to have a future and as a vital force can probably be referred to as "social democracy." In Europe this trend is perhaps best represented in the Italian Socialist Party, somewhat in the French Socialist Party and perhaps to a degree in the Swedish Social Democratic Party. With the predominance of revisionism in the French, Spanish, Italian and other European Communist Parties the mainstream of these parties seems to be converging with the traditional center Social Democratic tradition on the same analysis, strategy and organizational forms. The alliance, between the Socialist and Communist Parties in France, Japan, Spain and Italy might well be taken to point to an eventual

merger as fewer and fewer issues hold them apart. Strong minorities in the major European Communist Parties have resisted the reformist tendencies and can be expected to fight such a consolidation of centrist social democracy, and very likely split when and if they lose. In the U.S. there are numerous signs of a revitalization of center social democracy in such groups as Kinoy's Mass Party of the People, Michael Harrington's Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee and a tendency in the New American Movement (that close to James Weinstein's and the journal Socialist Revolution), the supporters of the Tom Hayden campaign for Senate in California and James Weinstein's new weekly In These Times and the Journal Radical America. That the mainstream of the C.P.U.S.A. differs from these forces primarily in its mechanical defense of the Soviet Union is becoming increasingly apparent. There is a very real possibility that a regroupment of center social democratic forces in the U.S. into a vital mass organization will pull many out of the C.P. perhaps even provoking a split in the organization. In a general politicization of the U.S. and activation of the masses we can expect a rooted social democratic party, whose origins come from a merger of the various organizations described above, to develop because they fill a political niche as an intermediate force between revolutionary Marxism, led by a Leninist party, and the fully capitalist parties.

The center social democratic tendency can be expected to vitalize in the U.S. as it did in Russia (with the Mensheviks) and in Western Europe in the pre- and post-World War I periods (with the Second International Parties) in the wake of a radicalization of the working class. It can be expected to become the principle competitor of the new Communist movement for hegemony in the working class and in all progressive struggles. The remnants of the tiny Trotskyist, Maoist, and other sects (composed of those that refuse to join the new Communist party) can be expected to remain irrelevant and to sink to even greater obscurity (although some of them will undoubtedly recruit some members) as the two historical forces in which there are room – a revolutionary communist party and a reformist social democratic party – grow, recruiting most of their vital, energetic,

intelligent and honest cadre from the various sects and predecessor organizations. There is of course the possibility that in the short run two or even three major revolutionary communist organizations will grow establishing firm roots in mass struggles driving the smaller sects out and eventually merging into one organization only in the final stages of the revolutionary process.

The social basis for an emerging social democratic trend lies primarily in the better off segments of the working class, union leaders, petty bourgeois, intellectuals and white collar workers, all of which feel that they have something of a stake in the status quo and thus do not want to needlessly take risks. It can also be expected to recruit large numbers of workers on the basis of the natural conservatism of people and fear of the unknown, or put in another way, people who have not yet been convinced through their own experiences that all possibility for improvement has been exhausted in the present order and that drastic and sudden change is not only desirable but necessary.

Since the center social democratic trend can be expected to incorporate much of the working class and many left professionals and intelligencia who are honestly anti-capitalist it is clear that everything must be done by a revolutionary communist party to win it to, or hold it on the side of, working class revolution against capital through united front tactics (from above and below). It should be clear that if a vital and mass social democratic party exists a revolution will not succeed if it sides with the capitalists (as it did in Germany in the early 1920's). As reformist as it might currently be, and as much as their leaders, might now be selling out the real interests of the workers, this party, if it arisen, has to be worked with in order to make sure it comes down on the right side when push comes to shove.

4. Reformism

There is a convergence between the "revisionist" Marxist-Leninists, such as the predominant tendency in most Western European parties and the

center social democratic tradition. Both agree on the possibility of a gradual transformation to socialism, both feel that military hegemony is not a necessary condition for transformation, and both accept loose mass forms of political organization. Since the term, "revisionist" has been so abused in its usage as any change in Marxist-Leninist theory, since it is inapplicable to center social democrats who are not a part of the Leninist tradition, and because the essence of "revisionism" lies in the rejection of the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat, it is better to use the term "reformism" when describing the tendency, that it has a more or less fully socialist vision and a class analysis of society but believes that a gradual/non-military transition to socialism is a real possibility.

There is considerable confusion about the use of the term "revisionism." Some dogmatists would use it to mean any modification in the theory or strategy of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, or Mao Tse-tung. A consistent application of this definition would of course make Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao Tse-tung all revisionists, since each made some modifications in the theory and strategy of all of their predecessors. By this definition, Mao would be a revisionist four times over for having modified the thought of Marx, of Engels, of Lenin and of Stalin. Especially on questions of what is the primary contradiction in the world, what is the role of the peasantry, the petty bourgeoisie and national bourgeoisie, what is the role of nationalism, what is the best form of the revolutionary organization and what is the nature of the post revolutionary transformation, Marxist thought has been in a continuing process of change and development since the time of Marx. (And indeed during the very course of Marx's life, for his own thought also developed.) Marxism-Leninism does not drop from the sky. It is not received from Mt. Sinai like the word of God. Marxism is not a religious dogma. It is rather a body of analysis and strategy which is alive, constantly growing and changing as a result of its being used as a guide to action, and in part, found wanting.

There is a core of perhaps only five basic theoretical notions which are the essentials of Marxist analysis and, one basic organizational principle which defines Leninism. Anything else in the writings of Marx or Lenin, or in

Engels, Stalin, Mao, or whoever, could well be modified, rejected, developed, etc. as a result of practice without producing any "revision" in the essentials of Marxist-Leninism. The five essential elements of Marxist analysis are (1) Dialectical Materialism; the basic Marxist ontology which defines the world as an essential unity permeated with contradictions generally only one of which is principle at a given time and that sees qualitative change as inherent in things and caused by the internal contradictions; and the basic Marxist epistemology which sees knowledge developing as a result of the unity of theory and practice rather than in a purely rationalist or empiricist manner. (2) Historical Materialism; The understanding that all social institutions and historical processes are in the last analysis determined and structured by the logic of social relationships which in turn are determined by the logic of relations of production which are dominant in the society. Thus all social institutions and historical processes must be ultimately explained by their contribution to the logic of the mode of production or, to contradictions in the mode of production, or among different modes of productions. (3) Class Struggle; That since the decline of primitive communism and until the overthrow of the last class society the historical process and social institutions are permeated with the struggle between different classes (as defined by their relation to the means of production). Classes are the primary historical and institutional actors and thus an analysis of all major social struggles and processes must be a class analysis of which class is acting on what other classes (4) The labor Theory of Value/The Theory of Surplus Value; Virtually all wealth in a class society is produced by the productive class which does not own the means of production, but which must produce for the owning class as a condition for its eating. The owning class always requires that the producing class produce more than is returned to it as the condition of its labor. Thus the wealth owned by the owning class is a result of the exploitation of the surplus value from the producing class. (5) The Dictatorship of The Proletariat; The state in all class societies tends to be a dictatorship of the owning class (or classes) and operates in the interest of the owning class against the interests of the producing class. No owning class ever gives up its control of its state peacefully. Thus, just as the rising

capitalist class had to seize state control from the feudal forces, the proletariat, (and other oppressed classes) likewise must seize control of the state and fundamentally transform it into a proletarian state designed to reflect the will of the proletariat (and other oppressed classes and operate in their interests. Gradual transition to socialism and a transition without prior control of superior military force is an impossibility. Attempts to gradually implement socialism through parliamentary reforms are doomed to fail. An essential part of this notion is that the proletariat is, under modern conditions, the leading revolutionary agent (definitions of exactly what the proletariat is vary considerably).

Once a revolutionary transformation occurs it is necessary for the proletariat (together with other oppressed classes) to exercise a dictatorship (now for the first time in history of the vast majority over the small minority of ex-exploiters) which means that the old class of capitalists, landlords and their agents will have no political rights, while the proletariat and other oppressed classes will be the only ones whose interests are reflected in the state and who the state policies benefit.

The essence of Leninism is to: (a) reaffirm point (5) i.e., the centrality of the dictatorship of the proletariat against the prevailing "revisionism" of his time (e.g., Bernstein, Kautsky), and: (b) the organizational principles of the Marxist-Leninist party. The essentials of this organizational form, the sixth essential part of Marxism' Leninism lies in the notion of iron discipline, full mobilization of political energies of all members, authentic internal democracy and an ongoing process of criticism-self-criticism which produces flexibility and increasingly more successful practice.

In summary only a basic modification in any of these six points entitles one to be called a "revisionist." For example, neither acceptance nor rejection of either Stalin's definition of what a nation is or agreement or disagreement with the Comintern position of 1928-1929 that there was a Black nation in the U.S. in the 1920's or in the 1970's has nothing whatsoever to do with "revisionism."

Most of the actual focus of struggles about "revisionism," whether in China

in the 1960's and 1970's in Czechoslovakia in 1967-1968, in Italy and France in the 1970's and in the Maoist challenge to the Soviet oriented Communist Parties, lies in the question of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat – around the question of whether or not a gradualist transformation to socialism can occur, and around whether or not a dictatorship over the old reactionary classes exercised by the proletariat and their allies after the revolution must occur. Thus historically, and today, the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat tends to be the cutting edge of revisionism. The corollary of the rejection of the notion of the dictatorship of the proletariat is normally a tendency to reject the other five basic aspects of Marxism-Leninism as well. Dialectics tends to be forgotten as “useless philosophical dogma,” historical materialism tends to be replaced with eclecticism, class struggle tends to become just one of many forces including inter class unity and national unity,, the theory of surplus value is glossed over while the contribution of capitalists to production is emphasized and the Leninist organization forms tend to disintegrate into traditional social democratic, loose, low energy, polycentric organizations.

As with the definition of “trotskyist” we must be careful to apply a materialist, not an idealist, definition of “revisionist.” It is quite possible as clearly occurred for example in the “Kautskyist” center of the German Social Democratic Party before World War I, and in many Western European Communist Parties in the 1960's, for their programs to give official support to all six essential points listed above, including the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. However, in practice the organizations, as reflected in their popular agitation, daily press, involvement in parliament's work in mass organizations, etc., acted as if a socialist transformation was to be brought about gradually and need not involve military hegemony. On the other hand it is possible to have an organization whose program does not give prominence to the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat (as did many objectively revisionist parties), but in their daily work encourages the masses to rely on their own efforts and be prepared for an eventual military confrontation. It might well be wise for an organization, in order to enhance

its mass work and discourage repression, not to prominently and proudly broadcast advocacy of violent revolution (as did the suicidal bombast of the Black Panthers, Venceremos, and the Weather Underground in the late 1960's). Sloganeering is not necessary in order to prove that one is not revisionist. Instead it is necessary to patiently educate the masses as to the necessity of taking power into their own hands and the brutal response to be expected from the ruling class to such an attempt, and consequently quietly preparing the masses for such a possibility. The National Labor Federation seems to be taking such a tact.

A clear distinction should be made between the understanding that a dictatorship of the proletariat is necessary and the idea of the necessity of a violent and bloody revolution. While the first is in fact a necessity of socialist revolution the second may or may not be the case. In fact although all successful socialist revolutions have involved dictatorships of the proletariat (or of the proletariat in conjunction with other classes) only a minority have in fact come to power through violent and bloody revolutions. The Communist led revolutions were violent and bloody in China, in Yugoslavia, in Albania, and in Vietnam (North and South). Communist led revolutions were not violent or bloody in Czechoslovakia in 1940 (and to the extent that they were, in fact legitimate popular revolutions, in Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria and Rumania in the late 1940's as well). The Socialist revolution in Cuba in 1960-1961 was also, of course, a non-violent process. The Twenty Sixth of July movement which did fight a guerrilla war against Batista was not a socialist movement and had the support of almost all Cubans of all classes. The Socialist revolution did not occur until two years after the 26th of July movement came to power. The Bolshevik revolution in Russia in 1917 was also a mostly non-bloody transition with very few people being killed. The violence and bloodshed associated with the Bolshevik revolution occurred in 1919-1921 during the Civil War which was an attempt to liquidate the revolution. Likewise the Communist led revolution in North Korea occurred without a violent struggle.

What is central and essential in a revolutionary transformation then is not a bloody violent revolution, to maintain this is both historically faulty and

dangerous – since it might provoke adventurism, scare workers away and needlessly call down repression. "What is essential is military hegemony and the rapid and fundamental transformation of the state and economy. The reason for the peacefulness of the Czech revolution was the control by the Communists of the rank and file of the army and the presence of the Red Army which together would, have squashed any attempt by the capitalist class, to suppress the seizure of power by the Party. What was decisive in avoiding any significant amount of bloodshed in the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 was the strong organization of the Bolsheviks and their allies in the armed services which meant that the soldiers and sailors obeyed the orders of the Soviets rather than of their own commanders. Likewise, the non-violent transition in Cuba in 1960-1961 was a result of the 26th of July Movement wisely having disbanded the old Batista army and replacing it with the guerrilla army. As the case of the Allende regime in Chile shows, non-armed attempts to establish socialism must necessarily fail as the upper class will always utilize the means available to it rather than "peacefully" surrender its privileges. The only factor which will prevent the upper class from resorting to military force to, suppress popular revolutions is its inability to mobilize a military force which looks like it might have a chance of crushing the revolution. Organization within the military has historically been proven to be able to prevent such a ruling class reaction and hence to produce the very real possibility of a non-bloody transition.

The main danger for massive working class Communist parties such as those of France, Italy, and Japan in times of stability is "revisionism," i.e., reformism. With a stable mass base of workers whose conditions of life are, showing slight improvement rather than deterioration, during stable periods, such a party is under pressure from its base to do something about the oppressions of capitalism. Unable to initiate the revolutionary struggle and faced with the absence of a rapid deterioration in the position of the working class, there is considerable pressure put on it to "do something." To put forth a program and strategy that can meet the day-to-day needs of the working class. The abstract attribution of all problems to

capitalism and the call for revolution is not enough. This would result in the isolation of the kind experienced by the S.L.P. in the U.S. The large party must put forth proposals for improvement in living standards, strengthening of unions, removal of sexual and racial discrimination, etc. If it does not it would gradually lose its support to those that do fight for the day-to-day interests of the working class. But once it is committed to seriously fighting for the day-to-day interests; of the working class it can not easily refuse participation In a popular front type government which promises such reforms, by using the argument that reforms won't work, we want socialism. To refuse to do so would betray the very real needs and struggles of workers who are not all convinced that such reforms are a chimera. Thus, even a revolutionary Communist party with massive support in a non-revolutionary period is necessarily sucked into parliamentary and reformist struggles. It has no real choice (unless it were willing to degenerate into a sect and lose its working class base). Further there is pressure to maximize one's parliamentary delegation, secure parliamentary allies and maximize the probability of reforms being implemented once a party becomes seriously committed to fighting for victories in the worker's day to day struggles. This pressure can and has led to a renunciation of basic Marxist principles, the abandonment of Leninist forms of organization and the loss of revolutionary will.

Revisionism is not a sin, but a process of degeneration inherent in capitalist society. The process of degeneration can be reversed in a party with a massive basis in the working class in times of revolutionary crisis where the growing felt misery of its base combined With the now obvious futility of reformism re-energizes revolutionary will; reconfirms revolutionary analysis and revitalizes the old revolutionary forms of organization. So long as a party is truly based in the working class, gives at least official endorsement to Marxist-Leninist traditions and remains at least somewhat democratic, the possibility for revolutionary revitalization is quite real and must be prompted by people inside and outside the party. The best cure for revisionism is a revolutionary crisis. The alternative is a shrinking in size of a Communist Party, its renunciation of the logic of reformism and its

refusal to play the parliamentary game. This could only occur at great cost to its Working class base and its leading role in progressive struggles, and would prove a great boon to the social democratic party which would be expected to eagerly step in. The price might be worth paying in order to maintain a principled Marxist-Leninism and a truly revolutionary organization form which is prepared to go into action and rapidly expand in a period of revolutionary crisis. Such an organization might be able to play a leading role on the basis of its principled history in revolutionizing social democratic organizations and progressive struggles. On the other hand by surrendering leadership of mass struggles to social democrats it might find itself too isolated to be effective in such a crisis.

The revolutionary left is thus faced with a very real dilemma that Can not be papered over by slogans and facile denunciations of “revisionism” or “ultra-leftism. Somehow the revolutionary left must continue to actively and seriously participate in the battle for reforms without mitigating its revolutionary energy, analysis and organization. While honestly fighting for reforms within the system, it must resist the tendencies to compromise in order to facilitate the realization of reforms. It must continually stress the necessity for a dictatorship of the proletariat, the need for a rapid qualitative transformation into socialism and the necessity of gaining military hegemony.

The problems faced by a massive Communist Party in anon-revolutionary crisis can not be reduced to the simplistic anti-revisionist polemics so characteristic of tiny petty bourgeois based grouplets. Reformism is not a sickness, but rather the natural course of events under certain conditions. Revolutionaries must deal with it, not by moralizing, cursing and calling “revisionists” “cockroaches,” but rather by maintaining the integrity of Marxism-Leninists inside and outside the massive working class based parties, making the best of a bad situation, expanding their forces and preparing for the day when they will assume leadership of the revolutionary struggle, in a crisis period.

5. Petty-Bourgeois Radicalism

The term “petty-bourgeois” is thrown around extremely loosely to characterize opponents right, left, and center. The term is used in such a loose and performative way that many prefer to avoid it altogether as a categorization of political positions. However, the term does have a rather precise meaning. The petty bourgeoisie, because of its class experience and interests is characterized by (1) individualism and competitiveness which comes from the struggle to survive or get ahead engaged in by independent farmers, small shopkeepers, professionals, lower level managers, etc. Their strivings to be unique, outstanding, or get ahead at the expense of one’s fellows, which is induced by the laws of competitive markets for the independent petty-bourgeoisie and the techniques of promotion and control for the salaried petty-bourgeois, are manifested in petty bourgeois radicalism as well. The main manifestation of the individualism/competitiveness of the petty bourgeois on the revolutionary left are (1) anarchism: which elevates the individual and lack of discipline, both in regard to revolutionary organization and the post, revolutionary period, to principles; (2) trotskyism; which glories in sect creation and intranecine polemics; and; (3) sectarianism in general, which thrives on theoretical contest among small groups each with their theoretical leaders. The inherent arrogance and “I’m the greatest, you’re a cockroach syndrome” of sectarianism is the manifestation of petty bourgeois competitive individualism on the left.

Another distinctive characteristic of both the independent and employed petty bourgeoisie is their intermediate status between the capitalist class and working class. While in normal times this produces a moderate politics intermediate between the conservatism of the capitalists and the socialism of the working class, in times of crisis the petty bourgeoisie comes under great economic pressure from both the capitalist class which tries to reduce it to the status of workers and the working class which through its unions and parties fights back, often hurting the petty bourgeoisie as well

as the bourgeoisie. In such times of crunch the petty bourgeoisie becomes militant and takes one of three courses, active support of the bourgeoisie, active support of the working class or active pursuit of an independent distinctively petty bourgeois fascist course. Often different segments of the class go in all three directions and often the main thrust of the class flips from one thing to another. Whether the mainstream of the petty bourgeoisie is allied with capital or with the working class, because of its intermediate status it is not a dependable ally. Thus a militance, even extremism, characterized by instability and desperate vacillation in seeking salvation, is characteristic of the petty bourgeois in a time of crisis, and further is an inherent characteristic of petty bourgeois revolutionaries. The ultra left revolutionary sentiments of the petty bourgeois can dissipate just as quickly as they are created, transforming themselves into another fad (eastern religion, drugs, etc.) cynicism or even ultra-rightist politics. Lenin understood this well:

... the small owner, the small master . . . who under capitalism suffers oppression and, very often, an incredibly acute and rapid deterioration in his conditions and ruin, easily goes to revolutionary extremes, but is incapable of perseverance, organization, discipline and steadfastness. The petty bourgeois, "driven to frenzy" by the horrors of capitalism is a social phenomenon which, like anarchism, is characteristic of all capitalist countries. The instability of such revolutionism, its barrenness, its liability to become swiftly transformed into submission, apathy, fantasy, and even a "frenzied" infatuation with one or another bourgeois "fad" – all this is a matter of common knowledge. (Left-Wing Communism)

The intellectual/ex-student strata of the petty bourgeoisie (many of whom drop out of their petty bourgeois class backgrounds and training to take working class jobs) have a third distinctive trait which is a property of their university training – i.e., virtuosity in dealing with abstract theory largely in a rationalistic and rhetorical manner. The removal of the intelligensia from the day-to-day life of the working class (which generates respect for empirical data and practice) is largely absent from the sheltered children of the petty bourgeoisie who tend to be outstanding college students before

they become revolutionaries. The very valuable theoretical skills such students could bring to the revolution is often wasted in tiny sectarian groups which waste their venom on each other and on the really revolutionary organizations. This distinctive characteristic of petty bourgeois intellectuals is manifested in the strong tendency to dogmatism.

Petty bourgeois radicalism is thus shaped by the material life conditions of the petty bourgeoisie; competitive individualism, middling status which is being lost, and in the case of petty bourgeois intellectuals, theoretical virtuosity removed from practice. Petty bourgeois radicalism is thus characterized by sectarianism, adventurism and dogmatism as well as by instability. Thus it is in its roots the petty bourgeois backgrounds of its adherents that the ultimate causes of ultra-leftism, sectarianism, and dogmatism are to be found. This analysis is not to condemn the petty bourgeoisie, for they are a great reservoir of strength for revolutionary forces and provide necessary skills and resources to our movement. It is rather a call to petty bourgeois revolutionaries to question their isolation from the working class movement, and the sectarianism, ultra-leftism and dogmatism of their grouplets and to accept leadership from the working class whose interests they must come to articulate.

The working class has a very different life experience than the petty bourgeoisie. Its work experience generates solidarity rather than competitive individualism. To survive and get ahead in the working class militant unity as expressed in unions, strikes and mutual support are necessary, this is the opposite of the experience of shopkeepers, students and college teachers. The working class as a proletariat with no stake in society has a clear and unambivalent stake in socialist revolution, unlike the petty bourgeoisie that has some privilege and status to lose. Relative to what they had before, working class people do not lose as much as the petty bourgeois in economic crises and are better prepared to protect themselves. As a result working class radicalism is far more stable, consistent, reliable, thorough and unfrenzied than that of the petty bourgeoisie. Working class people who develop their consciousness in a far more empirical and practical manner than students, learn more from

their experience and less from books than intellectuals, have a greater respect for practice and more of a distrust of abstract ideas, and thus tend more than the petty bourgeoisie to understand the worthlessness of ideas developed independently of practice. Working class radicalism thus tends to reject sectarianism, ultra-leftism and dogmatism.

D. The Three Banes of the Revolutionary Left

1. Dogmatism

It seems that right up to the present quite a few have regarded Marxism-Leninism as a ready made panacea: Once you have it, you can cure all your ills with little effort. This is a type of childish blindness and we must start a movement to enlighten these people. Those who regard Marxism-Leninism as religious dogma show this type of blind ignorance. We must tell them openly, "Your dogma is of no use," or to use an impolite formulation, "Your dogma is less useful than shit." We see that dog shit can fertilize the fields and man's can feed the dog. And dogmas? They can't fertilize the fields, nor can they feed a dog. Of what use are they? (Mao Tse-tung, Feb., 1, 1942 in Stuart Schram, *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung*).

Dogmatism is an error in the theory of knowledge. It is the advocacy of an analysis or strategy on the basis of faith, either in a source of authority (e. g., Peking Review, Trotsky's writings, Stalin, etc.) or simply in a decision or assertion made without empirical justification, and the consequent impermeability to change through the empirical disconfirmation of practice. Dogmatism's opposite is the scientific method of theory and practice, where positions are arrived at on the basis of summing up practice and consequently constantly grow as practice develops. Dogmatism is equally associated with leftist or rightist political errors. The Second International's politics were based on a whole set of unquestioned dogmas which became its operating assumptions, e.g., don't seize power until the working class is a majority, socialism is possible only in the most advanced countries, the economic crisis will produce the revolutionary crisis, etc. The Bolsheviks

were excellent in criticizing the dogmatic (i.e., unscientific) nature, of these assumptions (see Stalin, Foundations of Leninism, part II). Dogmatism can equally well be found on the left e.g., the idea that anything the Soviet Union (or China) supports must be right (or wrong), the idea that Blacks are a nation because they are oppressed, the idea that the fight for reforms undermines revolution, etc. The essence of dogmatism then is the holding to political positions even in the face of contrary evidence based on the unsubstantiated claims of authority or sometimes simple assertion. Dogmatists tend to stubbornness in their unreasonable reluctance to change as a result of overwhelming empirical evidence which counters their positions. They do not understand the scientific method on which Marxism-Leninism is based.

The dialectical materialist theory of knowledge has been verified over and over again in the successful revolutionary struggles of the Russians, Cubans, Chinese, Vietnamese, etc. Only the close back and forth movement between theory/strategy and practice, with practice playing the leading role, can result in a correct strategy/ analysis and in successful struggle. Yet in spite of the clarity of such brilliant works as Mao Tse-tung's On Practice and his Where Do Correct Ideas Come From many of the admirers of the Chinese Revolution in the U.S.A. fall into exactly the error that Mao wrote his above cited essays against – dogmatism. Dogmatists in practice reject the dialectical materialist theory of knowledge in favor of idealism, rationalism, and scholasticism. The history of the Chinese Communist party is a history in good part of Mao's struggle against various forms of dogmatism. We can learn much from these struggles. Dogmatists have a propensity to decide questions on the basis of citations from the classics rather than from a careful study of contemporary conditions, to mechanically apply the experience of other countries at other times rather than to scientific ally sum up their own experience on the basis of a prolonged give and take between theory and practice today, and to advocate that theory should be primary over practice since we must have theoretical clarity before we can enter into successful practice.

In its extreme form in the U.S. it has been exemplified in the Communist

Labor Party and in the groups in and around the “Revolutionary Wing” (PRRWO, WVO, RWL), groups whose slogan is “Build the Party on the Ideological Plain,” dogmatism often takes the form of prolonged and methodical study of the works of Lenin (especially the first 6 volumes of his selected works which deal with the party forming period) and Stalin in the absence of any significant political practice. The explicit theory of knowledge of these “closet Marxist-Leninists” is that we must know precisely what we must do and what the effect of our actions will be before we enter into practice. If we don’t have theoretical clarity and unity before political practice then we might well make mistakes that could do more harm than good. Since we can achieve both unity and a scientific analysis and strategy through study and discussion in the absence of practice this should be our primary task in the present period, hence their slogan “build the party on an ideological plain.” Political practice is thus put off until after unity is achieved and theoretical clarity attained through study and discussion (the highest form of struggle in the present period). The CLP and the groups around the RW sharply attacked the RCP and the OL for “economism” and advocating “spontaneity.” The attack on the RCP was directed against its involvement in working class struggles and especially against the content of the various “Workers” who it was argued were bowing to the “spontaneous” struggles of the U.S. working class rather than stressing the development of unity and theoretical clarity. It was said that the RCP’s involvement in the working class was mistaken and that it could do more harm than good because it was undertaken on the basis of inadequate analysis and clarity, analysis and clarity that could come only from study of other revolutionary movements at other times.

The RCP responded to this criticism in very sharp terms in the July 1974 issue of Revolution and in a summary paragraph of its party program:

The dogmatists act as though revolution is conducted in a closet. They think the squabble for some mystical “communist clarity” (struggle between closets) is the “highest form of class struggle.” They, worship books and try to intimidate people with endless quotations. They treat Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-tung Thought not as a science but rather as a

system of lifeless, abstract formulas which neither grow out of concrete mass struggle nor are ever applied to it. (RCP Party Program)

Although the RCP itself has serious problems with the dogmatist error, their analyses of the CLP/RW dogmatist theory of knowledge is quite correct. Correct theory is, of course, a necessary condition for correct practice, but where do correct ideas come from? Practice (both correct and incorrect) is the necessary condition for correct theory. The taste of the pear can only be known through biting into it. Failure is the mother of success. Correct theory can not be known in advance. It can only emerge in the process of a continuing and never ending going back and forth between theory and practice. All attempts to establish theoretical clarity before engaging in practice are necessarily doomed to failure and sectarianism since it is impossible to know what to do before interacting with the world. To quote Mao:

“The standpoint of practice is the primary and basic standpoint in the dialectical-materialist theory of knowledge.

... the reason Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin could work out their theories was mainly that they personally took part in the practice of the class struggle and the scientific experimentation of their time. ...

If you want to know a certain thing or a certain class of things directly, you must personally participate in the practical struggle to change reality, to change, that thing or class of things, for only thus can you come into contact with them as phenomena; only through personal participation in the practical struggle to change reality can you uncover the essence of that thing or class of things and comprehend them. ... If you want knowledge, you must take part in the practice of changing reality. If you want to know the structure and properties of the atom, you must make physical and chemical experiments to change the state of the atom. If you want to know the theory and methods of revolution, you must take part in revolution.. . All genuine knowledge originates in direct experience.

Discover the truth through practice, and again through practice verify and

develop the truth. Start from perceptual knowledge and actively develop it – into rational knowledge; then start from rational knowledge and actively guide revolutionary practice to change both the subjective and the objective world. Practice, knowledge, again practice, and again knowledge. This repeats itself in endless cycles, and with each cycle the content of practice and knowledge rises to a higher level. Such is the whole of the dialectical-materialist theory of knowledge, and such is the dialectical-materialist theory of the unity of knowing and doing. (Mao Tse-tung, On Practice)

The struggle against dogmatism within our movement has recently been taken up by a number of M-L groups in the U.S.: namely the Guardian, the Bay Area Communist Union (see their excellent booklet, Beginning Analysis) and the Philadelphia Workers Organizing Committee (see their call for a national center in the January issue of The Organizer and their exemplary study Black Liberation Today). These groups understand that it is not only the CLP/RW but also the RCP and OL that are making the dogmatic error of putting theory above practice and relying on authority rather than science to decide questions. The PWOC's categorization of the CLP/RW is brilliant; "Rejecting dogmatism in favor of ultra dogmatism, they advocate sounding a retreat from the working class movement, a retreat from the stormy seas of class struggle to the cushioned rooms of intellectualist study and debate." (The Organizer, Jan. 1976).

The PWOC feels so strongly about the dangers of dogmatism that it is making unity against the dogmatic trends within both the RCP/OL and CLP/RW one of the two conditions for participation in the national center it is trying to create.

The BACU, a group of people in San Francisco Area comparable in size, but somewhat more experienced in the M-L, movement than the PWOC, also makes anti-dogmatism its principle point of unity:

Dogmatists are lazybones. . . . Such a tendency always underestimates the importance of participation in mass struggle for the development of correct political line. They may understand, in a one sided way, that "political line determines everything" but they do not understand "where correct ideas

come from.” Many of the smaller and newer organizations, as well as many individuals, are predominantly making this same mistake. Partly this is based on the newness of many of these forces to Marxism, to the need for theory and the need for a Party. Partly it reflects a reaction to the mistakes of RU and OL and a desire to study hard so as to avoid these mistakes, partly it is a reflection of the base of the current movement among intellectuals, at least its leadership, and our lack of roots among the people. Dogmatism provides a perfect forum for opportunist maneuverers, splitters, agents and professional talkers. Dogmatism and sectarianism, as well as revisionism, take the heart out of Marxism-Leninism. Dogmatism and sectarianism both make use of the “subjective factor” (i.e., the intention or conscious will of communists) to downplay the need for a concrete analysis. They both fail to base their politics on developing a program that can lead the broad masses to revolution, but instead talk only to those who would listen to them on their terms. (BACU, Beginning Analysis)

The development of detailed strategic plans in a vacuum is worse than useless. First, there is absolutely no basis to believe that one person or group’s detailed strategic plan is any better than anyone else’s, there are now about two dozen M-L groups in the U.S. today each with a strategic plan which each is sure is correct, the only problem is that each plan, although based on a “careful study and investigation,” is different from all the others. The only basis for a detailed strategy and for achieving unity around that strategy is practice. The ultra sectarianism of the contemporary U.S. left is a product of its dogmatism and lack of integration in working class struggles, and hence the lack of a basis to validate strategy and unity. Second, the lack of respect for practice, which the dogmatic method encourages through its idealist and rationalist theory of knowledge leads us to waste valuable time and energy in pursuing mistaken strategies worked out in advance of practice. Failures are regarded as temporary, and in general, dogmatists tend to ignore the lessons of failure in favor of dogmatic assertions about the potentialities of things and confident promise that eventually the line will prove to be right. Such dogmatically arrived at strategies are thus worse than useless. They

positively get in the way of work. Third, the dogmatic theory of knowledge, promotes demoralizing internal struggles and vicious sectarianism which saps our energy. Ideas contend against ideas, individuals are trashed, people who have to work 8 hours a day get worn down, and the best talkers and quoters triumph, while most participants simply tire out or split to form their equally irrelevant revolutionary grouplets. The resolution of differences through practice, on the other hand, provides both a real basis for deciding who is right, is far less likely to demoralize and generate sectarianism, and provides for the organic development of a unity that is more than arbitrary.

All this is not of course to argue that we should act without thinking or that we should not have strategies. Clearly we must develop strategies and think about what we do. The point is only that we can not develop unity or strategies in a closet or through debates among closets. The point is to engage in practice so as to develop our unity and strategy, so that they can be improved, again tested out, again modified and once again tried out. Real unity can only emerge when it has a real basis in common practice. Unity achieved via the CLP/RW method of ideological struggle is irrelevant, since it is not based on the Validation of practice. Workable strategies can only emerge through the process of give and take with practice which validates them.

2. Sectarianism

Sectarian tendencies in internal relations lead to exclusiveness towards comrades inside the Party and hinder inner Party unity and solidarity, while sectarian tendencies in external relations lead to exclusiveness towards people outside the Party and hinder the Party in its task of uniting the whole people.

Many of our comrades tend to be overbearing in their relations with nonparty people, look down upon them, despise or refuse to respect them or appreciate their strong points. This is indeed a sectarian tendency. After

reading a few Marxist books such comrades become more arrogant instead of more modest, and invariably dismiss others as no good without realizing that in fact their knowledge is only half-baked. (Mao Tse-tung, Rectify the Party's Style of Work)

Sectarianism is both an error in style of work or relations with people that disagree with one's analysis, and an error in revolutionary strategy (in construction of alliances against the main enemy). As an error in style of work sectarianism manifests itself in an arrogant attitude in personal relations which puts blocks in the way of patiently winning people over to revolutionary politics and prevents one from learning from others.

Sectarianism in style of work has serious negative consequences in hindering recruitment, in promoting inflexibility and in discouraging lack of learning from the masses. Sectarianism as a strategic error manifests itself in failing to unite all that can be united in a struggle against whatever is the main enemy at a given time. Thus the opposite of sectarianism (whether of the social democratic anti-communist variety or the ultra-leftist variety) lies in refusing to form united fronts of all socialist and worker's organisations, popular fronts of all progressive organizations, and honestly working toward organizational unity among all Marxist-Leninists.

Sectarianism thus divides revolutionary and progressive forces, doing the work of provocateurs and police agents, holding back the revolutionary movement.

Sectarianism's corollary is dogmatism. Such has historically been the case in religion as in politics. The dogmatist way of coming to knowledge, reasoning on the basis of taken-for-granted assumptions such as the resolutions of the Comintern in 1928, the latest issue of Peking Review, the head of one or another organizations reading of Stalin, etc., necessarily produces a wide diversity of dogma most of it in mutual contradiction with the rest. This is an inevitable result of different people seeing different things in Lenin, Stalin, Mao, the Comintern resolutions, or Peking Review, or reasoning in different ways from these authoritative sources or from different people taking different sources as their primary authority. The dogmatist theory of knowledge thus generates a plethora of tiny sects

each holding on to their sacred dogma defending it against all comers, in the process launching a holy war against all other sects. Each sect insists that it has the correct interpretation of the sacred authority, and that if only the working class could see it, then it would become the leader of the revolution. Each sect tends in good part to blame the others for getting in the way of the working class seeing the truth of its line, and thus for being “road blocks to revolution.” This absurdity reached its extreme in the ultra-Trotskyite N.C.L.C. which took this doctrine to its logical conclusion in concentrating its primary struggle against leftist groups which it hoped to physically destroy so that it would gain hegemony on the left, and thus to be in a position to provide leadership to the working class. The fratricidal struggle among groups is a substitute for the leadership of working class struggles and tends to occur historically in those periods in which the left is isolated and ineffective in mass struggles.

Sectarianism means to treat friends like enemies and thus is the opposite of opportunism which results in treating enemies like friends. It is based in the subjectivism of petty bourgeois intellectuals used to dealing in abstract ideas competing with one another on the highest level of abstraction.

Sectarianism is the opposite of united front and unity politics. It is based on the premise that other allegedly revolutionary and socialist groups, by clothing their fundamentally mistaken analyses and lines in revolutionary language, are in balance hurting rather than helping the development of the revolution. It is based on the premise that theoretical battle between tendencies, waged in hostile non comradely and unconstructive ways can demolish bad lines and result in the hegemony of the correct line independent of validation or development of that line through practice. It at essence opposes the Marxist-Leninist theory of knowledge which maintains that correct lines can only emerge through struggles of the oppressed which produce both correctness and unity around that correctness, since the working class, unlike the petty bourgeoisie, needs unity rather than theoretical virtuosity.

The premise of sectarianism is mistaken. Its notion that people will be won

to correct positions by hostile polemics against opposing tendencies on the left more than through united front and unity tactics is just wrong. Sectarians greatly overestimate the danger of workers being misled into taking "revisionist paths." It simply isn't the case that exposure to pacifist, feminist; nationalist, reformist, etc., ideas are in balance negative forces acting on the oppressed. Whether or not this is the case is a product of whether or not the major alternative is acceptance of status quo ideology and non-struggle attitudes or revolutionary politics. In the U.S. feminism, nationalism, reformism, etc., are mostly progressive since the revolutionary alternative is so underdeveloped. Any struggle against capitalism, even when waged by pacifists, feminists, nationalists, reformists, etc., is a good thing. It puts the masses in motion, teaches them lessons, and sensitizes people to revolutionary issues. Likewise, the influence of pseudo-revolutionary tendencies such as that, of most of the trotskyist groups, which, while they are hostile to the mainstream socialist movements, nevertheless fundamentally challenge capitalism and from time to time even participate in a struggle. If the only alternative is acceptance of capitalist politics it is better that these groups reach working people for it at least softens them up to a revolutionary analysis. Many are the people who have passed through the non-violence of SNCC, SCLC or CORE, radical feminism, black nationalism, liberal Democratic politics, mid-1960's SDS, YSA, NUC and NAM, who today are revolutionaries. It would be strange indeed for us to argue that this road is now closed and that the effect of such politics today is only to deflect people from revolutionary analyses. Such is emphatically not the case, nationalism, feminism, reformism, pacifism, etc., still serve as bridges, way stations and transmission belts from mainstream to revolutionary politics because the gap is too wide to bridge without this intermediary step. The real alternative today remains between mainstream politics and any progressive challenge. For the present period feminism, nationalism, pacifism and reformism remain a far greater threat to the bourgeoisie than to the revolutionary left. The most effective way of keeping the transmission belt open and avoiding isolation is to maintain popular front type relations with pacifist, feminist and nationalists groups, treat them in a comradely, principled fashion, and win

the respect of their members by our hard work, dedication and the evenhanded treatment we give them, while always being upfront about our politics (with out being heavy handed or overbearing in presenting them).

Those that argue that sharp polemics against other tendencies produce more recruits and greater respect in the working class than unity, united front and popular front strategies, must prove their contention with hard evidence. The experiences of the differences between the politics of the Third Period 1928-1934, compared to the Popular Front period 1934-1939/1941-1947 seem to be overwhelming evidence against their position. The international communist movement grew far more during the Popular Front period than during the Third Period. The Third Period politics characteristic of much of the Maoist left in the U.S. proved its bankruptcy in the 1930's. It is an historical tragedy that the old "social fascists"; the epithet directed against the social democrats in the early 1930's (reformists were considered to be the worst enemies of revolution), are reborn as the "cockroaches" of the R.C.P. (which sees other leftists as holding back the worker's struggle). The program of the Revolutionary Communist Party describes all other leftist and Marxist-Leninist groups as follows:

And the proletariat takes a ruthless stand against those petty bourgeois hustlers who refuse to take up the stand of the working class, but recognizing its revolutionary role, proclaim themselves the leaders of the proletariat and try to ride the worker's backs to power. These forces pose as "communists" or "socialists" and in this way are able at times to attract some sincere revolutionaries, even a few from the working class. But the leaders of these groups are deadly enemies of the working class, acting as agents of the bourgeoisie in attempting to confuse and demoralize the proletariat, split its ranks and derail its revolutionary struggle. When the workers refuse to follow them into the swamp or into an ambush, they viciously attack the proletariat and its Party.

These various agents of imperialism, in and of themselves, amount to nothing more than cockroaches which the working class could squash

under its feet. But these types do pose a greater potential – they can act as the “shock troops” for the development of a phony “socialist” or “progressive” movement that would aim at diverting the working class from the revolutionary path and setting it up to be smashed by the bourgeoisie.

(R.C.P. Program)

Marx suggested that “all facts and personages of great importance in world history occur, as it were, twice . . . the first time as tragedy, the second as farce.” Marx’s categorization aptly describes the contemporary rebirth of Third Period politics.

Sectarianism produces an arrogant self-confidence which manifests itself in souring relationships with people outside of one’s group. Exclusiveness and arrogant sectarian attitudes obstruct the development of respect necessary for assuming leadership of the oppressed and recruiting non-party people into one’s organization. Thus in addition to being not based on science, sectarianism, even if it by chance happens to be founded on a correct analysis, is nevertheless immensely harmful in revolutionary work. Sectarianism as a style of work turns people off rather than persuades. Sectarianism is based on the idealist and pedagogically silly assumption that correct knowledge, when recited, will necessarily convince, and that therefore it is only sufficient to know the truth to win leadership. The sectarian attitude thus ignores the key importance of style of work in winning leadership. It is not true that line decides everything, the slogan of the 1930’s and 1940’s that “cadre decide everything” is just as valid. Correct analysis and strategy is no more important than the quality of cadre and the mode of presentation they employ.

Even if sectarians happen to be correct, sectarianism is still a major barrier to winning leadership. But most of the time sectarians are wrong and consequently their arrogant presentation of themselves not only blocks their achieving a leadership role and winning recruits (which in this case might be a good thing) but also blocks their learning from the masses, other groups, and their experience in general. Involved principally in justifying their own line in a defensive fashion from other*s attacks and in

trying to destroy others positions, line develops as much in a defensive manner to cover oneself from accusations of “revisionism,” “opportunism,” “centrism,” “Trotskyism,” “spontaneity,” “anti-theoreticalness,” etc., as it does in response to practice. In good part the response of the various other Maoist groups to the attacks of the RCP in the period 1973-1975 was to armour themselves with defensive positions against the RCP broadsides, and then counter-attack. Thus the Maoist left in good part fights positional warfare against itself, in which each group tries to show (1) its loyalty to China and (2) its hatred of the Soviet Union, so as to prove it is not “revisionist” in the eyes of the others. This game of positional warfare parallels the battles among Trotskyists about who is the real representative of the 4th International, and provokes little more than amusement in non-Maoist circles. Of course, such a means of coming to correct positions has nothing in common with the Marxist-Leninist theory of knowledge which argues that correct positions can come only from practice. We must stop being concerned about whether others call us revisionists, opportunists, centrists, trotskyites, adventurists, etc., and simply be concerned about developing ourselves as part of the revolutionary leadership of the working class.

Sectarianism must not be confused with principled disagreements and comradely polemics among Marxist-Leninists and between Marxist-Leninists and other socialists, nor should it be confused with strong attacks on self-proclaimed leftists who sabotage revolutionary projects in a conscious and consolidated manner. The health of our movement, especially in its pre-party stage where no one can be sure if their analysis is correct, depends on a living, free exchange of the full range of positions. Such dialogue should be encouraged rather than suppressed. At this stage of our growth, it is legitimate to debate just about anything, bringing in our fragmented and limited practice which can most legitimately be interpreted in a wide variety of ways. Even when a large mass based cadre party is built, its vitality and leadership role will depend on a lively internal discussion within the party around the issues that are currently facing it – although of course with democratic centralism to resolve issues after a period of

debate – and between the party and other progressives. Sectarianism does not mean discussion which is the life blood of a movement, it means rather the arrogant attitude that one group or tendency knows everything, the other nothing, and the consequent treatment of friendly forces as enemies.

There is of course a role for unfriendly polemics directed against the consolidated enemies of working class struggle. Such hostile polemics against real enemies should also not be confused with sectarianism. At any given point in the development of the revolutionary process there is a primary contradiction with the various social forces lining up on one side or the other. When allegedly left forces line up with the capitalists or imperialists against a popular or revolutionary struggle there is no longer any role for friendly criticism. In such times the most acid attacks are necessary in order to expose the objectively reactionary role of such groups, e.g., the Mensheviks in the October revolution, but not in the February revolution; Social Democrats in Germany in the period 1919-1923; the Trotskyists in the anti-imperialist struggle; the Anarchists and Social Revolutionaries in the Soviet Union beginning in 1919. Groups and tendencies which might play a progressive role up until the time for an armed uprising could balk at such a measure, and thus the policy of relating to them might have to switch overnight from one of united front and friendly polemics to sharp attacks as such reformist forces defect to the side of the bourgeoisie. In such times there is a real danger of the defection of social democratic leadership confusing many workers neutralizing large segments of the potentially revolutionary population. Consequently nothing but the sharpest polemics may be in order. The effectiveness of such polemics in splitting the social democratic traitors to a revolutionary struggle from their rank and file followers is a function of how principled Communists were in the preceding period in treating social democrats (both leaders and rank and file) with respect. The sharp turn from friendly to hostile criticism thus will have a considerably greater effect than could possibly have been the case if there had previously been nothing but hostile criticism (like in the fable about the boy who cried: wolf). Great care must be exercised in avoiding the mistake of hostility attacking

Reformist forces before the actual revolutionary period is at hand.

There is also a role for hostile criticism in attacking consolidated ultra-left sects with little or no practice or role in working class struggles who concentrate their fire against revolutionary struggles and organizations rooted among the masses. Such ultra-left sects can confuse honest intellectuals and even parts of the masses during times of crisis, with their claim of being the only true revolutionaries and opportunistically attacking the inevitable mistakes, necessary compromises or flexible revolutionary strategy of the Communist Parties. Most of the tiny trotskyist groupings in the U.S. and around the world fall into this category. United fronts with such groupings are futile since their only purpose is to undermine working class revolutionaries and build support for their own tiny tendency. Occasionally it might be necessary to participate in a coalition with such ultra-sects because other honest forces have not yet seen their destructiveness, but in such situations no trust should be put in them and no energy wasted in winning over their members, rather the focus should be on exposing them in a manner not disruptive of the overall purposes of the coalition. Great care should be exercised to avoid confusing consolidated and irrelevant sects with honest forces who are currently following mistaken ultra-left lines. Unity among revolutionary forces within the working class, and among the people, is a necessary condition of victory over the bourgeoisie. Sectarianism as the destroyer of such unity is the enemy of revolution. Both in the struggle against racism, sexism, war, unemployment, etc., waged before the revolutionary, period and in the revolutionary struggle itself; solidarity is key. Solidarity can only be based on mutual respect among groups and tendencies with different policies. Placing secondary differences in the forefront fragments the left and allows the bourgeoisie to win by taking advantage of our unity. Working class people, whose daily life experiences on the job teach the importance of solidarity, sense; this, and are not receptive to those that preach ideological purity at the expense of working class solidarity. The working class must learn on the basis of its own experience that a revolutionary analysis is correct. We cannot stand outside of massive struggles criticizing the leading currents in the working

class movement. To do so isolates us even if our line is correct. If we are serious about winning reforms, as we must be if we are serious about the working class struggle, we must promote unity among all forces on the side of reforms. If we are divisive and destroy the unity necessary to win a reform (e.g., against sexist or racist practices) we will isolate ourselves from the masses (e.g., women or blacks). Likewise, if we are serious about winning a revolution we must have the patience to build a solid mass basis for such an action and not launch uncomradely attacks against centrist leadership, until it is clear that they have pretty much already been exposed in the eyes of their followers as class traitors and thus that such an attack would cement working class unity for an immanent revolutionary struggle rather, than fragment our forces.

3. Ultra-leftism

Dogmatism as an error in the theory of knowledge is found equally among ultra-leftists and social democrats. Sectarianism as an error in style of work and strategy while it is found on the left and right is somewhat more characteristic of ultra-leftists than those that make the right error. Self-righteous arrogant, thrashing of friends and potential friends is a basic characteristic of ultra-leftist dogmatism. However, not all sectarians, are ultra-leftists. Many social democrats are also sectarian especially in their relations with Communists. However, since the right opportunist error consists of treating enemies like friends and compromising principles for the sake of maintaining good relations, sectarianism is more likely to occur, among ultra-leftists.

Adventurism is one manifestation of ultra-leftism, namely the launching of militant actions, strikes, insurrections, guerrilla warfare, assassinations, etc., before the masses can be brought into motion and the time ripe for such actions. Adventurism destroys cadres, isolates revolutionaries from mass struggles, brings down needless and premature repression and sets back the revolutionary struggle.

Ultra-leftism need not include adventurism, but by definition ultra-leftism is sectarian and dogmatic. Ultra-leftists always see revolutionary conditions as more advanced than they are. They see the masses more ready than they really are for revolutionary actions and propaganda. Because of their mistaken ultra-left analysis they treat groups and individuals who are not yet convinced of the need for a revolutionary analysis as hopelessly consolidated reformists, and enemies of the revolution. In sum, ultra-leftists, whether they adopt adventurist strategies and tactics or not, always adopt strategies appropriate for more advanced situations than the present reality.

The opposite of ultra-leftism and adventurism is right opportunism, i.e., the betrayal of revolutionary goals and strategy for the sake of short term and relatively minor gains. For example, if an allegedly revolutionary party promises not to nationalize anything if it is elected to power but rather to make the workers tighten their belts so as to improve the foreign exchange position of the country, in order to get a majority of the votes, it is being right opportunist.

Ultra-leftism can be a form of opportunism, i.e. left-opportunism. It can be opportunistic because it exploits the difficulties of the mass revolutionary worker's movement, the necessities for compromises, and the patient zig-zag course required in any successful revolution, in yelling "sell out" from the side lines. Quoting Trotsky, Stalin or Mao, a handful of ex-students can sound very revolutionary in criticizing a truly revolutionary movement. Cloaking themselves in the mantle of revolutionary orthodoxy they may opportunistically win short term gains and recruits among those that do not understand the need for compromise and patience.

The ultra-left today, as always, fails to really comprehend the necessary conditions for a successful revolution and as a result makes the same errors that ultra-leftists always make of isolating themselves from the struggles of the working class. Lenin, summed up the two essential objective conditions for successful revolution in his *Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder*, a work which is as appropriate today as it was in

1920 (it should be very carefully studied by us all):

The fundamental law of revolution, which has been confirmed by all revolutions, and particularly by all three Russian revolutions in the twentieth century, is as follows. It is not enough for revolution that the exploited and oppressed masses should understand the impossibility of living in the old way. Only when the “lower classes” do want the old way, and when the “upper classes” cannot carry on in the old way – only then can revolution triumph. This truth may be expressed in other words: revolution is impossible without a nation-wide crisis (affecting both the exploited and the exploiters). It follows that for revolution it is essential, first that a majority of the workers (or at least a majority of the class-conscious, thinking, politically active workers) should fully understand that revolution is necessary and be ready to sacrifice their lives for it; secondly, that the ruling classes should be passing through a governmental crisis, which draws even the most backward masses into politics (a symptom of every real revolution is a rapid, tenfold and even hundredfold increase in the number of members of the working and oppressed masses – hitherto apathetic – who are capable of waging the political struggle), weakens the government and makes it possible for the revolutionaries to overthrow it rapidly.

The universal characteristic of ultra-leftism, or left-wing communism, is that it either does not appreciate the role that crisis plays or sees crisis as the permanent state of capitalism which amounts to the same things justification for adventurism and reliance on their own organizations rather than on the masses. Ultra-leftists overemphasize the power of the party and downplay the role of the masses. With Trotskyists they tend to blame bad leadership or sell outs of the “revisionists” for the failure to wage a revolutionary struggle, rather than the lack of a crisis, and the unreadiness of the masses to take militant revolutionary action as a result of it. They suggest that a true “Communist Party” would lead a revolution if only they could convince the masses that they were being sold out. The whole exercise is most idealistic and for the most part without foundation in reality. Revisionist leadership is a product of social conditions, specifically

the pressure from the masses to press for reforms in a non-crisis period. The pressure from the masses for a revolutionary seizure of power occurs only in times of social crisis. To act to seize power in a non-crisis period when the issues have not yet become clear to the majority of workers and the most backward have yet to be drawn into politics and the government is still able to rule is to doom the movement to defeat and greatly set back the struggle. Revisionism must be combated by revolutionaries in non-crisis situations, if it is not, revisionist leadership will not take revolutionary action in a crisis situation. But the fight against revisionism can not occur on the traditional grounds of the left-wing communists (non-support of reforms, non-participation in elections and trade unions, treating the largely Marxist oriented working class parties and organizations like the enemy, calls for armed struggle, etc.). The struggle must occur within the large working class parties to the extent that it is possible, and in Marxist-Leninist groupings and parties to the left of the revisionist/reformist Marxist oriented parties, which attempt to build united fronts with such parties. Since the mass of workers do not yet see the real (as opposed to the theoretical) necessity of an armed seizure of power (this last in part because such a seizure is not yet viable) these workers and the organizations which they authentically support must be dealt with in a comradely way. Anti-revisionist/reformist critiques must go on, but in ways as non-antagonist to the working class members of the reformist organization as possible – so as to keep friendly and open relations with them.

E. Some Principle Manifestations of Dogmatism

1. Ethnic Minorities in the U.S.

During the 1960's the national liberation movements of the world, especially the Cuban and Vietnamese, caught the imagination of the New Left. The idea that the Vietnamese and others were fighting to free their nations from U.S. imperialism was extended to the idea that immigrants

into the U.S. working class within the domestic boundaries of the US. were analogous to the Vietnamese. They were considered oppressed “nations” and their struggles were considered “national liberation struggles.” The main basis for this extension of the concepts “nation” and “national liberation” seems to be in the fact that recent immigrant groups into the U.S. working class have been predominantly from Latin America, East Asia and the rural South, and thus share a skin color and often the language and heritage of the kinds of people who make up the oppressed nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America. The concepts of nation and national liberation were extended beyond domestic “people of color” to describe virtually all oppressed groups and virtually all struggles, such was the popularity of national Liberation Struggles in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Thus women, gays, yippies and even sociologists formed “liberation movements” using the analog of nations to describe their oppression and the tradition of the right of oppressed nations to self-determination to argue for their right to autonomy.

To substantiate the unscientific use of the terms nation and national liberation some rediscovered the 1928 and 1930 theses of the Comintern which argued for the existence of a black nation in the U. S. South, and the official position paper of the Bolshevik Party (issued by a party commission headed by Stalin) which defined a nation. Already convinced that the various oppressed “people of color” in the U.S. were nations, the attempt was made to rationalize this position by attempting to show that Blacks, Chicanos, etc., really fit Stalin’s definition, and that further, the Black nation defined by the Comintern still existed and that anyone that disagreed must be a “revisionist”.

This new version of the oppressed nation theory, now dressed up in Marxist-Leninist language with appropriate quotes, does not differ in essence from the earlier new left romantic notion. It elevates the category of oppressed nation, which encompasses all segments of a community of people of color over that of class, as the fundamental explanatory category. It suggests that somehow if Blacks, Chicanos, etc., were not defined as nations that this in some way suggests that they are less oppressed, or

that their struggle for freedom is less legitimate. The dogmatists that try to prove that these groups are nations, ignoring and distorting the overwhelming scientific evidence to the contrary, seems to be motivated by their prior conception that Blacks, Chicanos, etc., are oppressed and that oppressed people must all be nations.

In the attempt to prove the existence of oppressed nations within the U.S. the dogmatists make liberal use of citations from the Comintern documents and Stalin to prove their case. However, in doing so they miss the essence of both positions. In the traditional Marxist theory of nations, nationalism is considered to be a purely bourgeois phenomenon which obstructs class consciousness. However, a nation's right of self-determination must be supported so as not to drive the working class and peasantry of an oppressed nation into the hands of the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation. In order to win leadership of the oppressed classes it is necessary that the national issue be solved so that workers and peasants can no longer be confused when their own bourgeoisie tells them that Russians, Americans, whites, etc., are the cause of their problems. Likewise, the Comintern never argued that Blacks were a nation, rather only that the area of the South where Blacks were a majority was a nation within which the whites as part of this nation, were a national minority. Further, it did not advocate or encourage the succession of the Black Belt and the establishment of a separate state, although it insisted that Communists, while arguing against succession, would have to uphold the right of this region to succeed. The Comintern moreover did not argue that Blacks who had migrated to Northern industrial areas were part of the black nation. Such Blacks were considered to be a party of the single American working class.

The Comintern was probably wrong about the existence of a nation in the 1920's in the Black belt. A nation did however exist in the Southern states in the pre-Civil War period. This nation composed of slave owners as the ruling class and black slaves as the primary producers was a historically constituted, stable community of people which had a common economic life (the cotton economy), a common language (the Southern dialectic of

American English), a common territory (more or less the states that attempted to succeed from the union in 1860-1861) and a psychological make-up manifested in a common culture (Southern traditions). Within this Southern nation Blacks were a class, the class of slaves. In the post Civil War period Blacks ceased to be slaves but became predominantly share croppers on the old plantations working for the same plantation lords who used to be their masters. Only a very few blacks were able to become land owners, factory workers, artisans, businessmen or professionals – these latter occupations were reserved for whites. Blacks thus continued to be a class, a class of semi-serfs, or share croppers within the common economic life of the south, a common economic life which continued to focus on cotton and other commodity production within the plantation system. The factors of language, psychological make up, and territory went on as before, although the overall significance of the “common economic life” of the South diminished within the whole U.S. and eventually within the South as well as mechanization and wage labor increasingly after World War I superceded the old share cropping system. Today, share cropping and the plantation system is virtually extinct and with it the “common economic life” of the South. The U.S. today has one “common economic life” manifested in highly integrated commodity, capital and labor markets. Thus the phenomena seen by the Comintern in the 1920’s, rather than reflecting an emergent Black nation in the South, in fact reflected the declining Southern nation which had attempted self-determination in the 1860’s and lost.

Both the poor whites, the Blacks and the land owners of the old Southern nation have today been fully integrated into the single capitalist economy of the U.S. with almost all Blacks now integrated into the urban working class and heavily concentrated in its lower levels. The relentless pressure of competition leads to the homogenization of the American working class including Blacks, as racial barriers against them gradually come down within the working class. As the source of cheap laborers Blacks in the South, has dried up (almost no Southern Blacks are left on the land) a new source of menial laborers-was found in Latin America. Mexican, Puerto

Rican and other Latin immigrants have now come to be the primary source of immigrants into the working class, and the primary reserve for filling the most menial and oppression jobs, and thus they are coming to suffer all the brutal consequences of racism and discrimination which this Stratum of the working class always experiences.

Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Chicanos and other recent immigrants from Latin America and Asia do face a special oppression above and beyond purely class oppression; however, that special oppression – racism – is a logical and necessary outgrowth of their class position and exists in order to justify this class position in the eyes of the owning class, separate the lowest segment of the working class from the rest of the working class thus undermining class solidarity, and demoralizing the lowest segment of the working class itself. The theories that the oppression of Blacks or Browns is due to the fact that whites don't like the color of their skin, or to the fact that "Third World" people are oppressed nations or internal colonies obscures the fundamental identity of the plight of the most recent migrants from rural backwards areas into the industrial working class with the plight of earlier working class migrants from Europe as well as with the migrants from the Mediterranean basin to Continental Europe, and from the East and West Indies to Britain and the Netherlands. That is, it obscures the fact that capitalism necessarily generates racism and is its root cause, not white people's inborn prejudices or imperialism. The special oppression of "people of color" effects all members of these ethnic groups who thus all have a stake in fighting against the cause of racism–capitalism, even when they might be among the few who are relatively well off economically. Thus any revolutionary movement must mobilize the petty bourgeois and even perhaps the smaller bourgeois among "people of color" in the struggle against racism.

The principle role of racism in capitalist society is to split the working class, leading the different ethnic groups to think of themselves first as whites, Blacks, Latins, Italians or whatever and as workers second (if at all). It is to turn "race" against "race," getting the working class to fight among itself while the owners of industry laugh all the way to the bank. Racism

undermines unions, strikes, and other forms of working class solidarity as well as inhibits the development of class consciousness. Thus members of the majority "race" suffer from racism, as well as members of the minority "races," although of course members of the minority races bear a double burden. It has been shown that where racism is the most intense, working class solidarity is weakest (i.e., there are the fewest unions, the least working class resistance, etc.) and thus the lowest white wages and the worst white working conditions. The ideology of "white skin privilege" i.e., "no matter how bad your conditions are, at least you got the same color skin as the boss," is used rather effectively to keep white workers from uniting with Black against their bosses.

The working class, white, Black and Latin, can not advance until it overcomes racism. The struggle against racism is thus in the interest of all segments of the working class. A revolutionary party must thus organize all "races" in the struggle against racism. It must approach white workers in terms of how racism negatively effects white workers, not in moralistic terms, if it hopes to be effective. A revolutionary party can never pander to racism, although there will be times during the earliest stages of working with groups of white workers when the anti-racist struggle might have to be de-emphasized until sufficient trust is built up in revolutionary leadership.

A revolutionary movement in the U.S. without a strong base among "Third World" workers would be an absurdity. Obviously the struggles of "Third World" people against both their oppression as menial workers and the burden of racism must, be tied up with the struggle of white workers and other oppressed people against capitalism if the common enemy is to be defeated. Thus, an aspiring revolutionary party must securely root itself among "Third World" workers and in "Third World" communities. Isolation from "Third World" struggles will unquestionably prove fatal to any organization that aspires to become a Communist Party in the U.S. Thus the emphasis on fighting against racism, integration in the real struggles of Third World people, and respect for, and support of, "Third World" progressives (including both petty bourgeois and revolutionary forces) is essential. The principles of united and popular front strategies and tactics

must be central in the revolutionary organization's relations to non-Leninist organizations and trends in Third World communities.

The principle manifestation of ultra-leftism and sectarianism in relation to "Third World" struggles is the attitude adopted by groups like the PLP and RCP that "petty bourgeois," "nationalist" or "Bundist" leadership (e.g., allegedly the Black Panthers) is selling out the interests of Black workers and thus must be treated like the enemy. This analysis results in either the ultra-leftists standing on the side lines of the mass movements of Black, Latin and Asian people, or of outright attacking them. While petty bourgeois and nationalist leadership must be struggled with, the way to win the "Third World" masses to Leninist leadership is not to isolate ourselves from their struggles. Ultra-leftism here as elsewhere, in fact results in the consolidation of truly petty bourgeois and nationalist leadership under the cover of attacking it. By removing ourselves from the real "Third World" struggles, we lose our real base to content with them for leadership. The "spontaneous" movement among "Third World" people in the U.S. is towards Marxism-Leninism, only our own ultra-leftists dogmatic and sectarian stupidly can slow the process of the merger of this trend with that among white-workers.

2. Trade Unions and the Workers' Movement

Dogmatism is here manifested in two distinct tendencies; one, the trap the C.P. has fallen into since the late 1930's, and the other the characteristic of Trotskyist and most Maoist groups. The C.P. dogma directs leftists to de-emphasize radical politics, seek union office or seek to influence union officers as the primary thrust of working in unions, the ultra-left dogma directs its practitioners to sectarianism in attacks on progressive caucuses and leaders for being insufficiently revolutionary, and often, to forming their separate organizations, which tend to become dual unions which are pure, but isolated from the mainstream of the working class. Since the abolition of Communist factions in the trade unions in the late 1930's the C.P. has erred in the direction of not offending progressive union leaders to the

point of neglecting revolutionary propaganda and agitation among rank and file workers, not leading militant rank and file actions, and hiding the goal of socialism. Over compensating for this opportunist line of the CP., the P.L.P. then the RU/R.C.P. and now the O.L, have tended to reject support of progressive union movements such as that of Miller in the UMWA and Sadlowski in the USWA, overemphasize propaganda for socialism and revolution in the abstract, and in the case of some, such as the R.C.P. move to set up their separate organizations of militant workers, and thus remove these workers from the mainstream of the worker's struggle, as did the classical dual unionism of the I. W.W. and the C.P. led T.U.U.L. of the 1920-1934 period. Revolutionary workers must be kept in the mainstream of the union movement no matter how tough the battle. To voluntarily quit the unions and reject progressive caucuses is to do the work of the bosses and bureaucrats who would like nothing better. Working within progressive caucuses must consist of more than simply criticizing their leadership. We must put forth a class conscious position in a principled, non-antagonistic and non-adventuristic way in such a manner that the "middle workers" come to respect us rather than become hostile. Far more effective than haranguing workers about how we have the correct line, is hard and persistent political work within the unions and progressive caucuses in pursuit of the goals the majority of workers have democratically decided on even when we ourselves are not enthusiastically behind their ideas. We must patiently, principally and persistently put forth our analyses and alternatives. We can not sit by the side lines until the workers turn to us, for they never will if we isolate ourselves. We must immerse ourselves in the worker's struggles, while maintaining our identity as Marxist-Leninists.

Such emergence in worker's struggles has the dual benefit of (1) winning the respect of workers and hence putting ourselves in a leadership (vanguard) position and (2) modifying our line and analysis on the basis of learning from workers and workers' struggles. While we have much to teach workers which we have learned from our study of the Soviet and Chinese revolutions, and the history of working class organization in America, they have much to teach us about present day conditions,, how to

best organize,; what the key issues are, etc. In fact the multiplicity of views on the revolutionary left about how to organize in the working class can only be resolved through different, tendencies actually trying out their ideas. Far more humility about working class organizing is called for, at least until the working class teaches us which of our lines are more correct for contemporary American reality. Such humility and willingness to learn from workers would greatly reduce the manifestations of sectarianism on the question of intermediate workers' organizations, dual unionism, how to relate to progressive caucuses, which segment of the working class to stress, etc., questions which currently divide the revolutionary left.

Whether or not "intermediate workers organizations" have a useful role in the worker's struggle, the primary thrust of working class organizing must be to fight where the workers are, i.e., in the existing mass organizations of workers, the trade unions (both these that currently exist and those that will develop in the course of the struggle). It is essential to avoid the classical mistake of dual unionism, a serious mistake regardless of the name given to it: e.g., "revolutionary unions," the Trade Union Educational League, the Trade Union Unity League, Intermediate Worker's Organizations, etc. We must fight for control of the existing unions, rather than build alternative organizations, alternative organizations which remove ourselves from the masses. We must interject ourselves in the struggles of working people as they emerge, guiding these struggles toward class conscious actions and socialist consciousness.

There has been considerable discussion of the question of who is an "advanced" or "left" and who an "intermediate" worker. The importance of this question lies in its political implication of how different categories of workers are related to by a Marxist organization.. . "Advanced" or "left" workers are those that can be recruited by the Marxist organizations, while center workers are those that can be worked with on specific issues. If the operating definition of advanced worker is too high, as it typically is among ultra-leftists, it results in the error of not trying to win over those that can be won over in the short run. It seems that the definition used by the PWOC is correct: "left," or "progressive" workers, are all those who desire to organize

their fellow workers because they understand that their strength lies in numbers and unity. They are the self-motivated leadership of the worker's movement, having learned from their experience that we need to develop a systematic approach to our problems. They are enthusiastic about caucus building and about developing links with workers in other industries, city wide and nationally. They understand the need to find political solutions to our problems, and although they may not be all that sympathetic to communism they are open to the development of a class analysis of our situation (The Organizer, July 1976). PWOC has also defined an advanced worker as one who consciously sees the need to recruit their fellows to struggle against the bosses.

3. The Women Question

Dogmatism has been manifested on the women question both in the assertion that the oppression of women is the most basic aspect of the oppression of capitalism (or as basic as class) and in the position that the oppression of women is only manifested in the problems of working class women on and about the job. Sectarianism has been manifested in both camps, the first in antagonistic relations to Marxist men, women and organizations which see the class question as the single basic question, and the oppression of women as derivative from it, and the second in hostility to the women's movement, and their rejection of it as merely "bourgeois feminism" which distracts women from their real fight. Both these manifestations of dogmatism and sectarianism are equally mistaken.

While it is true that women's oppression is essentially a product of the class nature of capitalism it does not of course follow that women as a group do not suffer a special oppression as women. This simple fact seems to escape both camps of dogmatists on this question. Sexism, since the origin of class society, served to make private property, the accumulation of wealth and an efficient productive class possible. The primary relation to the means of production has historically given men the means by which subordinate women, and the desire for a

houseworker/mother to reproduce labor power has historically provided men with the motive. In capitalist society women have performed the two key roles of (1) reproducing labor power in the home (both her husband's labor which is sold on the labor market) and her children's who will be sold in the next generation (or will reproduce their husband's labor power.). Thus when a male worker sells his labor power to a capitalist, he is in fact being paid a wage sufficient to support both himself and his wife, because there are in essence a two person team, one of whom stays in the home as an auxiliary. Of growing relative importance is the second principle function of sexism for capitalist society – the proletarianization of women as white collar, service and menial blue collar laborers. Sexism results in especially compliant, supportive and non-resistant (“feminine”) behavior in those jobs in which capital especially needs such traits. Thus both as house-workers and as wage laborers the social role of women requires a sexist ideology and behavior that effects virtually all women as women whether or not they actually work in a factory or are married to a working class man. Sexism is general, although the class privilege of ruling class women far outweighs the oppression due to their sex. The common sexual oppression of women gives a real social basis to a women's movement based among both working class and petty bourgeois women, pretty much analogous to movements of Blacks, Chicano's etc., devoted to advancing women's interests and fighting for women's liberation. Women's oppression is distinct from the oppression of workers and thus requires separate mass organizations. However, since sexism is caused by capitalism and because the working class is the only effective anti-capitalist force, the women's movement must be directed against capitalism, be allied with the working class anti-capitalist movement and follow the leadership of working class men and women who have the greatest stake in overthrowing capitalism.

The revolutionary movement must build a united front with all organizations of working class women and organizations of women who share a socialist outlook and a popular front with all petty bourgeois women's organizations and organizations of women who share a petty bourgeois progressive outlook and attempt to persuade them through

practice that the overthrow of capitalism is a necessary condition for the liberation of women.

4. The Gay Question

The manifestation of dogmatism on the gay question is manifested in the treatment of gayness as a disease which will be eliminated in socialist society. In good part this analysis is based on the understanding that Maoists have about the Chinese handling of the question. This analysis runs against both a scientific analysis of the question and against the tradition of support of all oppressed groups by Marxist-Leninists. The dogmatic analysis of the Gay Question manifests itself not only in hostile and sectarian relations with gay progressives and Communists but with sectarian relations with other revolutionaries supportive of gay liberation as well. The hostility of groups like the RCP and the CL to gays has been an obstacle to the growth of their organizations and the winning of friends in the women's movement and among petty bourgeois professionals and students.

Human beings biologically are extremely plastic. Although we have a few diffuse needs we can be molded by society into just about any kind of behavior. Unlike most other animals, we have no genetically determined preferences for sexual relations with members of one or the other sex inborn within us (the plasticity of homo sapiens is a source of great evolutionary advantage over other species because it allows for the rapid adaptation to environments). The general moral code which dictates a preference for members of the opposite sex grew up and historically functioned because of the social and economic consequences of heterosexuality. Tribes which preferred homosexuality had fewer children than heterosexual tribes, and thus soon lost out in the struggle to survive. Strong taboos on homosexuality were thus developed (perhaps through trial and error) because of their survival value (as were taboos on incest). In the twentieth century the demographic problem of human beings no longer focuses on how to have the maximum number of children, but rather if

anything, on how to have fewer children. The strong taboo on homosexuality is now without an important function and thus tends to be dying of its own accord. To the extent that it lingers on, it is in good part because of the scapegoating function that homosexuals serve in (1) reinforcing the sexist "macho" ideal when they are held up for derision, and (2) in deflecting the concern of workers and other oppressed peoples towards non-class issues. While it is probably true that open homosexuality and bisexuality are more prevalent in times of decay of a civilization, this is only because all taboos and norms decay in such periods (the good along with the bad). It is also true that rebellion of the underclass, strikes and riots increase during periods of a decay of a civilization. The increasingly open practice of homosexuality in such periods can, no more be considered to themselves to be decadent than can the later phenomena. While it might be true that homosexuality tends to discourage men or women from working out their problems with the opposite sex and establishing close relations with them, it is equally true that heterosexuality tends to discourage people from working out close relationships with people of the same sex. No argument against homosexuality can be sustained on this basis.

It is however true that the celebration of a cult of homosexuality and the elevation of gay oppression to be a primary issue does deflect the concern of the oppressed away from the real issue – the class question – in the same way as the celebration of heterosexual sex, youth, nationalism, etc., deflects concern away from the class question. There is then a contradiction between the cult of gayness and a revolutionary movement, but this must not be mistaken for contradiction between the democratic rights of gay people to practice any form of sexuality they please without discrimination or repression and a revolutionary movement that must fight for these rights.

There is likewise no reason for a Communist Party to dictate to its members whether or not to be homosexual or heterosexual. So long as a cadre's sex life does not interfere with the cadres' political effectiveness or with the party's overall effectiveness his/her sex life is entirely the cadre's

own concern. This implies that a homosexual cadre working among strongly anti-gay industrial workers would have to be discrete about his/her sexual practices until workers develop sufficient understanding of the issue, and that homosexual cadre must take care to avoid public scandals promoted by reactionaries looking for a chance to deflect the concern of the oppressed away from class questions.

5. The Question of the Soviet Union

Dogmatism on the question of the Soviet Union is manifested in the idolization of the Soviet Union as the exemplar of socialism and as the guide for revolutionary analysis and strategy. Such dogmatism is practiced by the CPUSA and many CP's around the world that look uncritically to Moscow for leadership. Dogmatism is equally manifested on the part of Maoists, who regard the Soviet Union as being a capitalism of the Nazi type, and its foreign policy as being social imperialist and probably of greater danger to the world's people's than U.S. imperialism.

Mechanical defense of the Soviet Union has produced considerable disaffection from the CPUSA and other Communist parties because often the domestic and international policies of the USSR (while perhaps necessitated by the desperate situation the USSR was in from the 1920's through the 1950's) has had little to do with what socialism in the ISA would look like or what lines the US revolutionary movement should adopt. Defense of the Soviet Union (and China), which has been and continues to be part of the obligation of true revolutionaries must be on terms of the exigencies which that country has faced and not in terms of its closeness to the ideal socialist model on which the U.S. revolution would be based. The myths created about how good life was in the Soviet Union in the 1930's and 1940's, when exploded by Khrushchev, produced considerable demoralization, which need not have occurred had people held a scientific analysis of the Soviet Union and why it had to be defended as a progressive force which need not have been idealized. Soviet foreign policy has often been dictated by the needs of preserving and advancing the interests of the

Soviet state, and thus can and has come into conflict with the needs of the world revolutionary movement, which increasingly, over time, have come to diverge from the interests of the Soviet Union (although they remain fundamentally compatible with it). A more balanced and scientific position on the Soviet Union must be established which appreciates the immense positive contribution the Soviet Union has and continues to make to the world revolutionary movement, while refusing to side with it in its position such as its polemical attack on China or in its insistence on being the hegemonic center of the world communist movement. While declining to see the Soviet Union as the model for the future of all socialist countries we must understand that we can learn much positive as well as negative from the social forms the Soviets have developed.

While until a few years ago the greatest dogmatic error on the left was the dogmatic idealization of the Soviet Union, this has been dwarfed in the 1970's by the vicious and largely baseless dogmatism of Maoists who have the mirror image view of the USSR from that held to by the CPUSA and other pro-Moscow parties. They see the USSR as the exemplar of fascist monopoly capitalism which brutally exploits and oppresses the working people and minorities of the Soviet Union and is aggressively reaching out to oppress the peoples of the world. The parody of the Soviet Union they paint is based virtually entirely in the Maoists dogmatic acceptance of Chinese pronouncements formulated on the basis of the fear of the Chinese that "revisionists" within China will get control because of backing from the Soviet Union, and that this would mean the collapse of the largest really Socialist society in the world, thus very seriously setting back the world struggle. The various booklets produced by the RCP and Martin Nicolaus amount to little more than scholarly sounding assertions without substantiation designed to prove that the Soviet Union is capitalist. They both distort Soviet reality and foreign relations beyond all recognition and serve only to confuse the left and discredit the Soviet Union, China and their respective followers.

The Soviet Union is a socialist country (albeit somewhat distorted due to the terrible costs of being the first) where the working class is better off in

virtually every way than in capitalist countries (especially in comparison to those with equivalent GNP/capita). There is far more equality in the Soviet Union, there is no owning or managing class which owns or controls great wealth generated by the exploitation of workers, workers are widely and fundamentally involved in the full range of institutions which administer Soviet life and make decisions, the Communist Party which continues to play the guiding role in Soviet society is made up of two-thirds of common working people, considerable and rather fundamental debate occurs in the mass media, the oppression of unemployment is virtually unknown—there is no reserve army of labor – and rational planning in the social interest rather than the irrationalities of the market are in command of the economy. What opposition there is to the Soviet system comes almost entirely from the petty bourgeoisie, not from the working class. In sum the Soviet Union, in spite of its problems, the most serious of which are its failure to press for the abolition of the division of labor (as do the Chinese), a too conservative attitude about mass involvement in struggles and conflicts (like the Chinese cultural revolution) as well as a too slow approach to thoroughly democratizing popular institutions, is essentially a socialist country and a progressive force in the world. American revolutionaries must for the most part treat the Soviet Union as a friend and likewise treat those that look to it more than we do for leadership, also as friends.

Soviet foreign policy typically supports the more progressive and revolutionary forces in any given struggle. This was true in the cases of the post World War I European uprisings, the Spanish Civil War and the partisan struggles in the World War II period. However, it was not true so much of nationalist struggles against British and French imperialism during the popular front period in Asia and Africa, nor was it so true of the struggle of the Chinese Communist Party after 1935 when the weight of the Soviets leaned towards the KMT. Soviet policy since 1953 has been at least as progressive as it was before this date. While during the first years the Soviets sided with Israel, since the mid-1950s they have been one of the major backers of the Arab liberation movements (as a supplier of arms

their support has been critical). The support of the Soviets for African liberation since the 1950's has been an important force for decolonization and more recently for the rapid development of progressive forces, e. g., in Angola, Somaliland, Tanzania, Namibia, etc. In Indochina their massive and generous military support to the Vietnamese was an essential component of the Communist victories and in Latin America their support of Cuba made the difference between the success and failure of the revolution. The success of Cuba, in good part a result of the Soviets, has had a considerable positive effect on the growth and morale of the Communist movement in Latin America. Not all Soviet foreign involvements since the mid-1950's have involved active support of the most revolutionary and progressive forces however. The Soviet's support of Indira Gandhi's capitalist controlled Congress Party and their coolness to the liberation struggle in Cambodia are probably the two principle examples of the Soviets not supporting revolutionary struggles when they are on the historical agenda. Both of these exceptions are probably due to the Soviet's policy of building alliances among forces in South East Asia hostile to the Chinese, and illustrate how Soviet foreign policy responds to Soviet interests, even at the expenses of the world revolutionary struggle. It should be noted that while in the 1960's there were often clear differences between the Chinese and the Soviets on the question of support for revolutionary struggles With the Chinese criticizing the Soviets for insufficiently supporting revolution, since the Cultural Revolution the Soviet's record of support for progressive and revolutionary forces has been far better than the Chinese, who in the last ten years have been more concerned with building allies against the Soviet Union (which include the most rabid anti-communist forces and conservative Third World regimes) than they have been in promoting revolution against local ruling class and their U.S. imperialist benefactors. Chinese coldness towards the Chilean revolutionary struggle, towards the uprising in Ceylon, the struggle in Iran and Oman and the Portuguese revolution, are leading cases in point. Their opposition to the MPLA struggle against the CIA/ South African led attempt at instituting a neo-colonial regime in Angola, their support of pro-NATO reactionary forces in Europe and their hostility to the Cuban revolution are

clear cases of objective class collaboration promoted by the Chinese. There is little question to anyone that cares to look that Chinese foreign policy has reduced itself to an absurdity, and that the Soviet Union has come out of its conflict with China on foreign policy questions, the clear victor.

The Chinese are wrong, war between the U.S. and the USSR is not inevitable because of the logic laid out in Lenin's *Imperialism: The Highest Stage, of Capitalism*. First the Soviet Union is not a market capitalist country, it is guided by an economic plan. Far from having an inherent drive to invest capital overseas which can not be profitably invested at home, there is a permanent shortage of both capital and goods in the Soviet Union, because the economy is organized to fulfill needs rather than to make profits. Second, under contemporary conditions the advanced capitalist countries like the US. rely primarily on intensive domestic investment and, expanding government spending to provide outlets for profitable capitalist investment and market for goods the workers have insufficient purchasing power to produce. Thus contemporary advanced capitalist countries would not sink into depression in the absence of expanding foreign markets and investment opportunities. While imperialism is certainly profitable for the U.S., it is not necessary for the survival of the capitalist economy as Lenin argued. Thus neither the USSR nor the U.S. is inexorably driven to war to redivide the world in order to secure protected markets and investment opportunities. Because they are not necessarily driven to such a war by the logic of their economies detente and peaceful co-existence are real responsibilities. To the extent that the U.S. ruling class recognizes that nuclear warfare would be suicidal, they can be restrained from using nuclear weapons and a disarmament campaign achieve real success. It would be better for the left if nuclear weapons did not exist, but they do. And because they do, part of our energy must be directed against neutralizing them and decreasing the probability of their use, both because revolutionary movements are more likely to succeed in liberating billions without their use, and because nuclear warfare in itself is a horrendous evil that all progressive people must be mobilized to fight against.

6. Detente/Peaceful Co-existence

Another dogma which has been mistakenly accepted by the pro-Chinese is the position that the struggle for detente and peaceful co-existence between the Soviet Union and the U.S.A. is undesirable or impossible of realization, and in any event necessarily undermines revolutionary struggles. On the opposite extreme there is the dogma suggested by some Western European Communists that peaceful coexistence and detente rules out revolutionary transformation. Both of these dogmas are mistaken and must be replaced by a scientific understanding of the possibilities of nuclear devastation and the revolutionary process in a world of thermonuclear weapons.

The danger of the annihilation of life in North America and Europe is very real, A thermonuclear war between the USSR and the U.S. is a distinct possibility if only because of the logic of Cuban Missile Crisis type confrontations. The results of such a war, even if intended to be limited (directed only at the other's missile bases) is most likely to escalate into a total exchange of all nuclear fire power and the resultant death, immediately or by radiation poisoning and starvation of all life in and around the areas attacked, and perhaps through most of the entire Northern hemisphere as well. It is most likely that the few human beings who survive a nuclear war will organize themselves according to socialist principles, i.e., socialism will expand after the Third World war as it did after the first and second, but the costs paid in the death of billions of people is clearly a result to be avoided at almost any cost, regressive and revolutionary forces thus have the obligation to do all they can to decrease the probability of nuclear war, promote disarmament and generate the conditions in which the U.S. and the other capitalist countries would be unable to use nuclear weapons. The Soviet Union since 1945 has consistently been a major, if not the principle force actively pursuing world disarmament, the banning of nuclear warfare, and mobilizing the world's people behind these goals. The fight against nuclear weapons and for

disarmament and the Soviet Union's role in these struggles must be supported. Soviet-U.S. detente is a necessary ingredient in any disarmament program since any world scale nuclear exchange will focus on these two countries, and thus Soviet-U.S. detente must be actively encouraged and supported. In pre-nuclear days, the dangers of war were nowhere near as great, in fact revolutionary movements stood to gain considerably from wars between imperialist countries. Such is no longer the case.

The struggle for nuclear disarmament and detente does not mean that the struggle for socialist revolution needs to be mitigated however. Those that argue that it does (which does not include the Soviets) are mistaken, What it does mean however is that the basis for a revolutionary transformation in the advanced capitalist countries must be firm, the socialist process must be self-reliant and no help can be expected by way of troops from the existing socialist countries. Thus the support given to the indigenous revolutionary process in Eastern Europe by the presence of the Red Army which suppressed reactionaries and prevented right wing coups and military support from other capitalist countries can not exist in Western Europe, the U. S. or Japan. The presence of nuclear weapons in the hands of the capitalist class also means that the importance of political work within the military is enhanced and the possibilities of Guerrilla warfare resulting in the building up of a Red Army to fight pitched battle with the regular armed forces are now all the more remote. It is likely that the capitalist class would resort to nuclear weapons against their own people rather than peacefully give up their power, only a strong organization within the military is likely to preclude this possibility. It is also likely that the ruling class of a nuclear armed capitalist country would be likely to try to provoke a nuclear war against the Soviet Union or China in the event of the danger of it being overthrown by a popular revolutionary movement, in order to mobilize the people, blaming the Soviets or Chinese for active intervention tantamount to invasion (by supplying arms and advisers to the local revolutionaries). Here again a strong organization within the military would seem to be key to preclude this.

F. Revolution, Violence and Extralegality

1. The Meaning of Being Revolutionary

Being revolutionary does not mean “picking up the gun,” reciting the works of Lenin, talking about class violence and the dictatorship of the proletariat or condemning those that work for reforms. Being “revolutionary” means acting so as to shorten the time left before a successful social revolution in which the working class and other oppressed people seize control over their own lives and constitute themselves as the dictatorship over the old exploiting classes. Anything that advances such a social revolution is by definition revolutionary, anything that hinders such a social revolution is anti-revolutionary. There is no necessary relationship between “picking up the gun,” talking about class violence, condemning advocates of reforms and reciting Lenin, and being revolutionary. Making a successful revolution a complex task involving sophisticated strategy, patience, and understanding of the differences between primary and secondary contradictions, the ability to be flexible, maneuver, establish alliances, work in stages, and often times retreat. What seems like the shortest strait line course to revolution can often in fact be a dead end resulting in frustration, defeat and decimation of revolutionary forces. Winning in the shortest time possible (given the real obstacles) requires a zig zag course (as did the Long March in China) also working to weaken the enemy, strengthen ourselves and fighting only those battles which we win (strategic victories).

Often times in the debate between two Leninist factions, one arguing that it is time to pick up the gun and go into the hills to start a guerrilla war and the other arguing no, it is rather the time to go slow and engage in patient agitation and propaganda in the working class, it is the later and not the former that is the most revolutionary, assuming that at that particular time, there is not a crisis of sufficient proportions in the society, and that support among the rural population is not sufficient to snowball guerrilla warfare into a successful revolution. Under these conditions guerrilla warfare could

be anti-revolutionary because it results in the deaths of some of the most promising cadres, mobilizes the petty bourgeois and many center forces on the side of the right, brings down unnecessarily repression, inhibits propaganda and agitational activities and results in the defeat and demoralization of the left (such would seem to have been the effect of premature guerrilla warfare in much of Latin America in the late 1960's and early 1970's).

Likewise, the debate between two Leninist factions, one arguing that it is time for an insurrection against capital, and the other arguing that we; must build a coalition with the non-Marxist led unions to fight for better working conditions and higher wages, it is not necessarily the first that is the most revolutionary. In a period when an insurrection would clearly be an adventurist act doomed to defeat such an action would result in the death and imprisonment of many good cadre, repression directed against formerly legal work, isolation of those that advocated insurrection and the demoralization and defeat of the revolutionary left. The policy of integrating revolutionaries into mass struggles of the (not yet fully revolutionary) working class, however, could result in giving workers a feeling for their power as well as expose the nature of the system, thus greatly expanding the basis for a future insurrection which has a good chance of being successful.

Of course, there are times when both guerrilla warfare and insurrection are the appropriate strategies because there really is a revolutionary situation, e.g. Cuba in the late 1950's, Vietnam in the 1940's, 1950's and 1960's, Russia in 1905 and 1917, etc. But it only during such truly revolutionary crisis situations, that insurrection and guerrilla warfare are revolutionary, i.e., advance the coming of the revolution. During non-revolutionary crises such strategies are adventurist and actually hold back, and hinder their revolutionary process. The inability to see the anti-revolutionary nature of ultra-militant strategies in non-revolutionary situations is the source of a considerable loss of forces among revolutionaries. We too often make the idealist error of confusing our subjective feeling about what is revolutionary (judgments based on the absolute militancy of strategy) with what actually

advances a social revolution (which must be based on a careful scientific analysis of concrete conditions) and which actually might not be especially militant in a given period at all.

The question always comes down to the fact that there are no easy answers about what is the truly revolutionary strategy in a given situation, only a concrete study of concrete conditions can give us answers. It is as easy to make the opportunists right error of non-seeing a really revolutionary situation when it exists, and therefore not adopting a militant strategy of seizing power as it is to make the adventurist error of seeing a revolutionary situation when it does not exist. Both errors have equally serious negative consequences in holding back the revolutionary process, and, thus in no way can we say that as a rule one danger is greater than the other. At any given time within a Leninist organization or movement with broad support there will almost always be some that argue that this is the time to attempt to seize power, and others that tend to argue that seizing power is not yet on the agenda regardless of the situation – i.e., there always tends to be adventurists and opportunists within our ranks. However, at any given time either the first type of error or the second tends to be the greatest danger.

During non-revolutionary situations in small parties and movements based primarily among the petty bourgeoisie and ex-students there is a strong tendency for the adventurist error to prevail (along with sectarianism and dogmatism). In large parties based in the working class in non-revolutionary situations where the pressure to alleviate the daily oppressions of working class people is immense the tendency to become opportunist tends to prevail. Workers can not be expected as a class to hold to Leninism as a faith waiting until a revolutionary crisis develops before seeking relief. The possibility of improving their conditions through mass struggles, and thus winning limited relief, is real, and given enough time is manifested in attempts to build alliances, coalitions and compromises that eventually tend to undermine revolutionary analysis and organization.

In truly revolutionary situations, among mass parties there is a tendency to make the opportunist error because the inertia of working so long to improve the daily life of the masses builds conservative instincts within the revolutionary party and a certain comfortableness with the status quo (e.g., fancy party headquarters), which predispose revolutionaries not to see a revolutionary crisis when it arises. The re-activation of the revolutionary movement thus often must occur through a break with the old party and the loss of valuable time and resources. Such was the case in the World War I period when the old Social Democratic parties revealed how ossified they had become by first supporting their respective governments during the war and then acting to repress working class revolution immediately after. The Socialist movement consequently had to split into revolutionary and non-revolutionary segments with many honest workers confused and remaining in the social democratic parties. A valuable opportunity was lost. Had the German Social Democratic party acted in a decisive and revolutionary way in 1918 to seize power the chances are that a successful revolution could have been consolidated in Germany. But the wavering and eventual anti-revolutionary attitude of its leadership, which sponsored the repression of the revolutionary left, proved fatal to the prospects for a German revolution. One might well argue that the Italian or Spanish CPs might behave in a similar way given the development of a true revolutionary crisis in Southern Europe.

It is also possible that the development of a revolutionary crisis might instead produce a reradicalization of these parties due to pressure from below which would intensify during a revolutionary crisis. As it becomes more and more apparent to the workers that the struggle for gradual improvements is not getting any place (as their condition deteriorates), and as the possibilities for socialism appear more and more real in the short run, pressure for decisive action to seize power would be expressed in any truly democratic organization of workers. Whether or not this pressure is manifested in the ending of an opportunist line or in a major split in the C.P.'s depends on the degree to which their organizational structure is responsive to the workers at its base. It might prove to be the case that the

Southern European C.P.'s are considerably more democratic than the World War I period Social Democratic parties, and thus that the revisionist C.P.'s can reverse their course. But in any event the facts that these parties have not reversed their course (and are in fact accelerating their speed along it), and the fact that the post World War I phenomena of major splits from the Social Democratic Parties firmly rooted in the working class which affiliated with the Comintern and more or less immediately became major influences in working class struggles has nowhere in the advanced capitalist countries been repeated, indicates that a truly revolutionary situation does not yet exist in the advanced capitalist countries. When a truly revolutionary situation did exist, e.g., 1918-1921 in Europe, the conditions called forth a revolutionary party because of pressure from the working class, not because students and ex-students saw the need for a revolution. The development of the Maoist (and the revival of the Trotskyist) movements in Europe in the late 1960's, and 1970's has pretty much restricted itself to intellectuals and ex-students. Although a few, mostly younger workers, have become involved, nowhere has either tendency developed deep and mass roots in the working class of the order of what the new Communist groups were able to establish in the 1919-1921 period.

In non-revolutionary situations such as the current reality in the U.S. and Northern Europe the main danger tends to be ultra-leftism. This danger is especially great where the revolutionary worker's movement is small and based primarily among intellectuals and ex-students-strata whose impatience and removal from the pulse of the working class is endemic. In revolutionary situations the main danger is opportunism, this is an especially serious danger in those countries with a long history of massive worker's parties leading the daily struggles of workers for reforms, which have considerable inertia if not hardening of the arteries. In non-revolutionary situations, especially where the revolutionary movement is small, the primary task is to build a revolutionary worker's movement, win people to socialism, develop class consciousness, give workers a feeling for their strength, create a disciplined organization that can act decisively in times of crisis, etc.

In non-revolutionary periods the struggles for reforms are, for the most part, constructive, especially when led by a party which draws revolutionary lessons from the successes and failures of these struggles. Fronts with non-revolutionary pro-reform forces are also useful means by which to win struggles, give workers a feeling for their power, build respect and trust for revolutionary leadership and recruit members into revolutionary organizations. Thus in non-revolutionary periods fighting for reforms is not the major danger, rather the sectarian, ultra-left policies which isolate the small Leninist groups from mass struggles are.

The danger of reform struggles in non-revolutionary situations where most of the working class is class conscious and the Marxist parties large comes not from the honest battle for reforms waged in alliance with reformist forces, but from failing to emphasize in agitation and propaganda the nature of the capitalist system, the need for revolution and the limits of reforms within a capitalist society. What is dangerous is to propagate the notion that a total transformation of the lives of workers can occur through a gradual process of reform. This is a danger because this could not happen under capitalism. Only a qualitative break with capitalism undertaken with hegemony of military force can qualitatively improve the conditions of workers. Education about this reality should be undertaken throughout campaigns aimed at reforms. Failure to educate the masses about the limits of reforms spreads illusions which may well prove fatal. Hopes of gradual change through reform would 'block' people from seeing that the decisive struggle will necessarily be military, and hence prevent them from preparing for such action. However, the very real danger of not preparing the masses for the necessarily military struggle is not the central issue until first the masses are class conscious, i.e., believe in socialism. It does no good to lecture the workers about the inevitability of violent revolution if the workers still favor capitalism. Instruction about which paths are and which are not viable and inevitable only become relevant when workers actually desire the socialist goal.

The primary problem where the revolutionary left in a non-revolutionary situation is big is to emphasize the necessity of military hegemony. This

must be emphasized against the inherent and massive opportunist pressure coming up from below as well as from the leaderships. But the primary problem where the revolutionary left is small lies in just winning people to socialist class consciousness and giving them the feeling of their power. Under such conditions united and popular fronts are all the more important as mechanisms of awakening the oppressed. The question of violent revolution versus peaceful transition is not a central one because the issue is not real to the masses of workers who have not yet decided between socialism and capitalism. Consequently public lectures about the need for a violent revolution tend to be misplaced. In fact, undue public emphasis on the violent nature of revolution at this stage is likely to be objectively anti-revolutionary, since it can scare workers away, isolate Marxists as extremists and bring down premature repression. The issue of violent vs. non-violent revolution is simply not the central question on most workers minds at the earliest stage of the revolutionary process. The public centrality of this question would seem to be far more important to the petty bourgeois intellectuals who tend to grow up in liberal,- non-violent environments where violence, guns, illegality, etc., is taboo. Working class people on the other hand are much closer to violence, guns and illegality, and are rather open to using all three in pursuit of goals they truly believe in. Consequently, to convince workers that capitalism is their enemy and socialism their hope is already to go half of the way towards convincing them that military hegemony will be decisive in the struggle. This is most definitely not the case among petty bourgeois students, who have strong pacifist and legalistic leanings, and with whom the, mere intellectual conversion to the principles of socialism has little effect on their attitude about violence or illegality. The recitations of belief in violent revolution and illegal work thus seem to function primarily to break the mystique of legality and non-violence among the liberal petty bourgeoisie, rather than as effective measures against opportunism in the working class.

The public treatment of possibilities of violent revolution during this period must not carry over into the internal education and discussion of the revolutionary organizations. Cadre must fully understand the very real

possibilities of violence, the absolute necessity of gaining military hegemony and the reality of beginning to prepare for it, if only psychologically and by emphasizing military organizing. Cadre must be fully prepared for all the contingencies of the struggle.

Once the working class is class conscious, public emphasis on the question of military hegemony is no longer adventurist or misplaced, but is now central. The question of how does the working class get socialism has replaced the question of how to develop class consciousness in the working class on the agenda. In non-revolutionary situations the immense pressure toward reformism exerted by the rank and file has to be actively countered with strong educational programs focusing on the nature of the state and the impossibility of gradual transition. Here, when the main danger really is opportunism, the major thrust of revolutionary efforts must be towards emphasis on the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the preparation for the military struggle, so that the somewhat successful struggles for reforms waged with the weapon of united and popular fronts do not lull workers to sleep, setting them up for the slaughter of a military coup de' etat. The extent that such a preparation takes the form of creation of a well armed worker's militia, winning over the -rank and file within the army, the actual creation of a Red Army in the hills, or merely preparing the workers for the necessity of creating a militia/Red Army/or winning the rank and file of the army is a product of the concrete conditions and the stage of development of the revolutionary struggle. Since it is impossible to have a reformist transition to socialism it amounts to murder/suicide not to prepare for the military reaction that necessarily will come from too successful a battle for reforms.

It must be emphasized that such military preparation has nothing to do with either sectarianism or adventurism. Pre-mature fighting with the army before the workers are in a position to win such battles would be adventurist and fatal. Preparation for such battles in the future is appropriate. Attacks on people who could be won to the revolution in a crisis but who will be driven away if treated like the enemy is sectarianism, but attacks on people who at the decisive moment side with the enemy is

necessary.

2. The Role of Violence and Extra-legality

Providing the revolutionary forces have military hegemony either through having won the rank and file of the army or having a Red Army which could Obviously squash any attempt at a right wing coup it is a real possibility that a social revolution need, not be violent (only because the workers are both prepared to be violent, and they have amassed superior means of violence). While revolutions need not be extra-legal, they must always involve relatively sudden transformations in which the working class exerts military hegemony. Attempts to make social revolution gradually through reforms necessarily fail, even if the working class has military hegemony. Likewise, attempts at rapid social transformation necessarily fail if the working class does not have military hegemony.

No ruling class has ever voluntarily given up its privileges merely because the majority of people want them to. As long as a privileged group has the means to preserve its privilege it will resist being reduced to the ranks of common working people. A life of leisure, command and power is far too valuable to an upper class to give it up merely because of a general moral principle that one should not use all the means available to it in pursuit of one's ends. As long as the upper class retains special access to the military and police through ties of blood, friendship and common interest between top officers and the upper class, they will act together to preserve hierarchy and capitalist relations of production. The military will necessarily intervene on behalf of the upper class to prevent social revolution even if 100% of the people want socialism. The only thing that would prevent military intervention is the obvious reality of decisive military defeat for a coup d'etat should it be tried, i.e., superior military force in the hands of the working class. Under modern conditions this can take one of three forms: (1) a rank and file organization in the army strong enough to disobey orders for a coup d'etat and side with the revolution against their officers; (2) an independent Red Army, either of locals or an army of comradely neighbors which is guaranteed to crush a rightwing coup. It is not enough that the

workers have rifles, for against rifles, the army and air force, under modern conditions, can put up devastating fire power which is sure to drive resistance underground or into the mountains to fight a rearguard action. This is not enough to forestall a coup, and likewise it is not enough to win an offensive insurrection. Even a well trained worker's militia armed with light weapons can not expect to win in urban areas against an army/air force which has a monopoly on heavy weapons and which keeps its discipline. Not even the Viet Cong was able to hold any cities until the last months of the war.

Guerrilla warfare which gradually builds up to conventional warfare is probably not a real option in the advanced capitalist countries, as the Tupamaro in Uruguay showed; unless popular support of the guerrillas is so overwhelming as to effect the army to the point of massive disaffections and refusals to obey orders. In any event in the advanced capitalist countries the key to revolution would seem to lie in insuring the loyalty of the rank and file soldiers to the working class struggle. Whether the revolution takes, the form of legal and semi-legal processes in which the revolutionary organizations win an election and attempt to implement revolutionary changes, or whether unconstitutional means are resorted to, the rank and file of the military is key. In the first case because they are needed to prevent a right wing unconstitutional move and in the second, because they are necessary to either seize the reins of power, or at least neutralize the army while the workers' militia seizes power.

Chile is the most recent case of what happens which socialism is attempted by-reforms without military hegemony. The attempt not only failed but resulted in grievous losses to revolutionary cadre and organizations. The right had no inhibition at all about violating legality and resorting to violence, neither can the revolutionary left. The only question is what strategy and tactics are best suited to allow the working majority to seize control of their lives from the small minority of exploiters, a small minority which not only makes the laws but feels totally free to use legal or illegal means as it suits them.

The primary question is not one of legality/constitutionality or illegality/unconstitutionality. A social revolution need not necessarily be made either within the legal framework or through seizing power in violation of bourgeois right. Just as the bourgeoisie uses legal and illegal means to preserve its rule, so to must the working people use legal and illegal means to assert its rights. First it must be understood that the Constitution and the legal system were set up by, for, and in the interests of the propertied classes, and are designed to systematically frustrate the popular will and operate in the interests of capital. Second it must be understood that large portions of the lower classes are confused by religion, patriotism, individualism, alcohol, drugs, etc., and often tend to vote for the religious and capitalist parties without really being conscious of what they are doing. As a result it is not necessary to play by the legal rules established by the upper classes, rules which they themselves violate or change whenever the working class, as in Chile, uses them against the interests of the upper class. If the overwhelming majority of politically active people give support of one kind or another to the revolutionary vanguard's actions, and the upper class is exposed and isolated, this is a sufficient condition for both revolutionary action to be taken and for such action to succeed, whether or not revolutionary action was taken through legal or extra-legal channels. If the vanguard party tries to make revolution without such overwhelming support for actions taken, and without the upper class having been exposed and isolated, the revolutionary attempt is bound to fail, whether or not it uses legal or illegal means.

The bourgeoisie felt absolutely no guilt about violating feudal legality when it made the British and French revolutions, cutting off the respective heads of the British and French kings, and establishing republics. Neither did the upper classes in the Colonies, when it overthrew British colonial rule, nor the Northern capitalists when they suppressed the insurrection of Southern Plantation lords. In all these cases the property of opponents was expropriated without compensation. The same folks that freely resorted to extra-legal means and violent methods to themselves come to power now preach non-violence to the working class. Hypocrisy. Each class

establishes its own political and moral principles, its own legality, its own conception of right and wrong. When the bourgeoisie fought the feudal lords each side played by its own rules. It was right against right. The class war between capital and labor is necessarily waged on the same terms – bourgeois right versus proletarian right. Neither side is obliged to play by the rules laid down by the other. The victor is thus not decided by how well one side or the other stuck to the rules, but solely by which was able to mobilize superior military force. Morality and right enter in only to the extent that they give legitimacy to one side or the other and hence serve to mobilize bigger armies*for one or the other side.

Gradual transformation from capitalism to socialism is economically and socially impossible, even when the working class maintains a monopoly on military force. There is no real middle ground between capitalism and socialism. Either the economy is organized essentially by capitalist principles relying at heart on markets and competition among enterprises with decision making concentrated in owners or managers or it is at heart organized by a central plan geared to the interests of the working class and reliant on popular mobilization rather than elites and markets to keep it running. Attempts to rely partially on markets and-competition and partially .on worker run enterprises and a half hearted plan always result in the worst of both worlds. Capital flees the country, refuses to invest, and sabotages production. Workers are unable to successfully manage individual enterprises relating to one another through markets, the plan fails because it is only partial, etc. As a result discontent spreads and demoralization sets in, and the ground work laid for reaction. Such phenomena occurred in Nkrumah's Ghana, Sukano's Indonesia, Allende's Chile, and Portugal in 1974-1975. Attempts to straddle the fence between socialism and capitalism necessarily produce economic crises which necessarily lead to social and political crisis. Any movement on the part of a government towards socialism must be rapid and thorough leaving no room for capitalists to consciously or unconsciously sabotage production or for international or local market forces to undermine the plan or worker's power. The gap between socialism and capitalism is a quantum which can

not be bridged in little pieces, but only through one big qualitative leap. This qualitative leap into socialism, although it can logically occur by legal methods and without violence is very likely to at some point involve either Violence or extra-legal methods or both. The qualitative leap must involve a thorough reorganization of the state apparatus and the state's role in society. In fact it must essentially involve the destruction of the old state set up to function as an instrument of the bourgeoisie and its replacement with a very differently organized state – an instrument of the proletariat. This means that the mechanisms of decision making have to be put securely in the hands of the people who increasingly come to administer their own affairs.

All revolutionary transformations whether basically violent or not violent, legal or extra-legal necessarily involve broad and deep popular mobilizations and struggles outside of mere elections and parliamentary battles. Elections and parliamentary votes while they may have a role in a process of legal transition to socialism are merely the expressions of the revolutionary popular movements which are actually the sole source of the energy for revolutionary transformation. The masses must do it themselves, no legislature or ballot box can do it for them. It is popular energy which can intimidate the right from making a coup, which forces rapid change, which takes over and runs factories and government administration, which is behind the all around revolutionary transformation of life. Only the masses can seize control over their own lives. A revolution from above with merely the passive vote of the masses is an impossibility. The essential question is then not legality-extra-legality, violence-not violence, but rather whether or not there is a mass revolutionary movement capable of seizing state power or not. If there is such a movement it may well be able to use parliamentary forms to gain legitimacy for its cause, neutralizing opponents because the law is on its' side (it would be foolish to refuse to use the law as its weapon, as the Communists did in Spain in 1936-1939, when it portrayed themselves as "Loyalists") and it would be foolish to resort to violence if it already had the right intimidated and isolated, since gratuitous violence might mobilize support for the counter-

revolution.

3. The Lessons of Chile

Far too facile lessons have been drawn by both the “revisionists” and social democrats on the right, and the ultra-leftists of the left, about the meaning of the defeat of Allende’s attempt to build socialism in Chile. The Italian CP’s analysis is that Allende showed that a united front government (winning an election even with 51% of the vote) is insufficient to move to socialism, since the petty bourgeoisie and the army will resist and necessarily frustrate the attempt, and that support of the order of 75-85% of the population is necessary to prevent reaction and a military coup and insure the road to socialism. Further to secure the 75-85% support all kinds of insurances have to be given to military men, the petty bourgeoisie and even the capitalists, to quiet their fears and allow very slow and gradual measures to be taken towards socialism. This lesson is pure and simple reformism/revisionism.

The ultra-left around the world drew a very different lesson, they argue that the blame for the defeat in Chile lay not with Allende moving too fast without adequate support, but rather with his government’s refusal to distribute arms to the workers or rely on an insurrectionary strategy, instead spreading false hopes that the military would not intervene. Such ultra-left criticisms are based more in dogmatic assertions about never-never land than they are on a cold hard look at concrete Chilean conditions. Allende’s ascendancy to the Presidency in 1970 was an accident. In fact he had actually gotten more votes the last time he ran in 1964. The right was so confident of winning the election that it divided its support among two strong candidates thus allowing Allende to win with only slightly over one-third of the popular vote. There was no revolutionary crisis in Chile at the time and there was no clear popular upsurge for rapid and revolutionary change. The upper class had not been isolated and the army remained strong. The revolutionary left had to contest elections if it wanted to be a part of the political life of the masses, it had to honestly fight for

improvements in the conditions of the workers it hoped to win and maintain the respect of the workers who were its supporters. Therefore, Allende was forced to seriously run for office and attempt to implement what changes he could, using his position or face the wrath of workers who would have legitimately felt betrayed had he not kept pushing for more and more for the working class. To maintain that the revolutionary left should not have spread illusions about peaceful transition, but should have concentrated instead on arming and training the workers is besides the point. The socialist and Communist parties did consistently teach that the capitalist state was an instrument of violence against the working class and that the working class would have to have superior military force. Nevertheless so long as elections existed in Chile vast numbers of workers and progressives felt the reality of peaceful change, i.e., bought in one degree or another the myth. If the revolutionary left started training and arming workers in 1960, they would not in fact have been in a position to lead a successful insurrection in 1970. Most workers would not have taken the campaign very seriously. The simple fact is people are willing to vote for socialism before they are willing to pick up the gun for it. This of course means electoral victories tend to occur before people are militarily ready to win a civil war.

The police and military would have been able to suppress a worker's militias because the government had not yet been thoroughly discredited in the eyes of the masses, i.e., the police had eyes, ears and friends everywhere. The very existence of free elections in 1964 and 1970 in which the majority did not support the left parties indicates that a revolutionary crisis had not yet occurred, i.e., that most people were still supporting the system. Attempts at massive distribution of weapons to the workers after 1970 would have certainly provoked a coup before 1973 in order to prevent the creation of a Red Army. Indeed so long as the masses retain considerable faith in parliamentary forms, i.e., held illusions about the process of socialist transformation, the election of Allende was inevitable. It was likewise inevitable that Allende would be unable to generate military hegemony either before or after his election, because of the reformist

illusions among the masses and the absence of a revolutionary crisis. The whole thing was a tragedy comparable to the Chinese massacre of 1927 or the Indonesian massacre of 1965. Part of the zig zag process of revolutionary transformation is that the masses must learn from their own experiences what is necessary to make revolution. The illusions of parliamentary democracy must be shattered by experience, the advanced consciousness of leading cadres is insufficient (see Stalin; Notes on Contemporary Themes: China, 1927, Pravda Article).

The memory of the heroic Allende years will live and grow among the Chilean masses and eventually burst forth in a genuine revolution.

The tragic events of 1970-1973 were more or less necessary. At best Allende could have used these years better in drawing sharper lessons about the nature of the state, and helping to dispel illusions about the probability of success. But to appear too skeptical about what he could accomplish would probably demoralize socialism's supporters from even trying. The correct line for revolutionaries during this period seems to be that of the MIR which gave critical but active support to the Allende regime without becoming part of the government. The MIR tirelessly pointed out the impossibility of completing the project without gaining military hegemony, and continually warned of the probability of the coup. It actively encouraged the development of a worker's militia and worked within the armed forces. Unfortunately the right did not grant the MIR sufficient time to gain enough strength in the armed forces or to build up a strong enough military counterforce to neutralize the right. No one who understands the nature of state power should have expected anything different.

4. Scenarios for Revolution in the Advanced Capitalist Countries

Any socialist revolution will necessarily be (1) armed, i.e., the working class and its allies must have superior military force, and (2) rapid, i.e., piece meal reforms can not add up to the qualitative transformation necessary. Whether or not a revolutionary transformation occurs basically in extra-

legal ways and is violent, however, is an open question. Revolutionaries must be prepared for both extra-legal struggle and for violence and must not be at all inhibited from using either as tactics and strategies. But neither must they fetishize them. Whether or not extra-legal, strategies and tactics, and violence, is resorted to is mostly a product of how the upper class responds to the growth of revolutionary forces in a crisis situation, which in turn is in good part a product of the response to the strength the revolutionary forces have been able to build up prior to the revolutionary crisis, and of the ability and will of the revolutionary forces to follow a truly revolutionary strategy (neither adventuristic or vacillating).

It is certainly a real possibility that in a country where the working class movement is very strong, almost all workers are in unions, workers have a militant tradition, the rank and file soldiers are draftees from the working class, are organized in soldiers unions and have connections with the worker's parties, where firm ties exist with the petty bourgeoisie, etc. , the "reformist"/"revisionist" parties in government could attempt a series of rather basic but not revolutionary reforms, which, because of the untenability of a middle course between socialism and capitalism would result in the capitalists refusal to invest, sabotage of production, etc., resulting in the creation of a revolutionary crisis. At this point a revolutionary seizure of power which is manifested in an electoral victory as well as in a massive popular movement setting up factory neighborhood councils (with the legal sanction of the newly elected government) could institute socialism. If the alliance between the petty bourgeois and the working class holds (i.e., no massive fascist movement is created) and the unity of the rank and file soldiers prevents a military coup, i.e., the rank and file soldiers support the revolutionary government, the capitalist class is isolated and unable to sponsor a counter revolution. Thus because the revolutionaries have military hegemony and takes decisive action in a crisis situation a genuine socialist revolution could occur with neither significant bloodshed nor extra-legality. It is a possibility that socialism might come in a country like Sweden, Finland, Denmark or another Northern European country in this manner.

But for the revolutionary process to occur without resort to extra-legality or violence everything must go right. The chances are that in most advanced capitalist countries the working class movement is not sufficiently strong, the alliance with the petty bourgeoisie not sufficiently firm, and organization within the rank and file of the army inadequate to guarantee that a popular movement manifested in an electoral victory and the rapid institution of socialism could forestall either a fascist movement based in the petty bourgeoisie or an attempted coup d' etat by the army. In such cases, which are likely to be in the majority, either a bloody civil war will be precipitated because the strength of the fascists and the generals is insufficient to crush the revolutionary movement, i.e., part of the army obeys orders, and part sides with the legal government, and a condition like Spain in 1936-1939 develops or the military coup/fascist counter revolution succeeds (as in Chile in 1973) and parliamentary rules are abolished by the capitalist class itself. In the first case the struggle immediately becomes primarily military and as the result of victory in such a civil war the working class comes into power, and the steps toward a thorough socialist revolution made. Serious revolutionaries must prepare themselves for such a civil war. In the second case any opposition to the military dictatorship is necessarily extralegal and any revolutionary activity is most likely to lead to armed struggle since the parliamentary course of reform is now closed. It is probably only in this situation, where the overwhelming majority of people are opposed to military dictatorship, that the objective conditions exist in the advanced capitalist countries for guerrilla warfare and the building of a Red Army independent of the official army, i.e., as in the partisan warfare against the Nazi occupations in the closing days of World War II in Europe. Serious revolutionaries must also be prepared for this eventuality.

There is also the possibility that although the majority of "class conscious, thinking, politically active workers fully understand that revolution is necessary" and "are ready to sacrifice their lives for it," and the ruling class is in a crisis which it can't solve, that the conservative parties could put together an electoral coalition which could narrowly win a popular election

on the basis of desperate appeals to the more backwards segments of the masses – pain of excommunication for Catholics who vote for the left, lies about the Communists taking away people’s children and sending them to Cuba, use of racism and nationalism, etc. If the people who vote for the conservative parties in a crisis situation are in fact politically passive people who have been manipulated by the right and not politically active workers and petty bourgeois who would be prepared to fight in the streets against a revolutionary government it is appropriate for the working class to seize power through extra-legal means, if it looks like a bloody civil war will not be precipitated and the masses of people will accept a revolutionary government more or less immediately after it takes power. Such an extra legal route to power can be successful if both of the following conditions exist: (1) military hegemony, i.e., leadership of the rank and file and many officers in the army who are prepared to disobey the orders of the unpopular government, distribute arms to the people, and put themselves at the disposal of the revolutionary government as did the Russian army in October 1917, and (2) a massive popular upheaval which is resulting in, the take over, of factories and in other popular actions without, provoking massive fascist type actions in response. Such an extra-legal course might have to be followed in a situation where a country’s constitution does not provide for, or the ruling parties do not permit elections during crisis periods, i.e., that it is clear that the majority of people want a revolution but no election can be held for two, three or four years, and by that time revolutionary energies would have been spent and the revolutionary movement suppressed. Revolutionaries must be prepared to act independently of constitutions established by and for the upper classes, provided only that the overwhelming majority of people would support extra-legal actions when they occur (either before or after the fact),. The bourgeoisie has no qualms about extra-legal means, neither can the left.

Revolutionaries must be prepared for any of the four possible scenarios. Guarding against both adventurism and putting the party in place of the masses, and opportunism/vacillation, working class power must be brought about “by any means necessary.”

G. Organizations, Coalitions and Class Alliances

1. The Role of the Party

There are two basic errors that have historically been made on the question of the relationship of the party to the mass movement: the error of downgrading the role of the party to a mere agitator and propagandist which does not play a day to day leading role in the mass struggle and guide the revolutionary process, and the error of substituting the party for the mass movement, which implies neglecting the role of the masses. Parallel errors are the feeling that attention to the question of party building is misplaced since the mass struggle and loose organizational forms are adequate to deal with the problems of mass work and, the opposite error of, obsession with building "the party," the unwillingness to do anything until "the party is built" and the feeling that the revolution will be right around the corner once we have "the party." The first type of problem, that of organizational looseness and the lack of appreciation of the power of disciplined revolutionary forms, plagued us in the 1960's. In the 1970's events have swung to the opposite extreme. Now almost everyone seems obsessed with "building the party"; even to the extent of neglecting popular struggles. The optimism of new converts, the feeling that the revolution will be easy once we have "built the party" is pervasive. What in fact happens is that groups like the Communist League, the Revolutionary Union and the October League recruit a few people and change their names, becoming more arrogant, sectarian: and dogmatic in the process, since they are convinced that they are now the revolutionary vanguard. Not wanting to be left behind each group in turn announces that now is the time to build a party and proceeds to intensify its level of dogmatism and sectarianism, falling victim to the magic-like belief that if the word "party" is in their names, and if their internal unity is high enough, then suddenly the working class will accept their leadership. The rationalism and idealism of the

whole enterprise is sad.

The party building enthusiasts confuse the need to have a democratic centralist organization which has sufficient experience in mass struggle, and which most revolutionaries recognize as having sufficient experience to develop scientifically valid lines, and which the working class and other oppressed groups have come to respect as the leading force in mass struggle, with the objective conditions of the creation of such an organization. As such they are guilty of a serious subjectivist error of letting their own subjective needs substitute for the historical possibilities of the movement. The fact is in the U.S. in the 1970's no Marxist tendency has come anywhere close to having sufficient experiences in the working class struggle to serve as a sufficient basis for a scientific determination of lines, and no Marxist tendency has come anywhere close to winning the confidence of large segments of the working class and other oppressed people. Likewise, honest Marxist forces are in disarray and tend to support more or less the full range of tendencies. A pre-party period has never more clearly existed anywhere than in the U.S. today. The dogmatists refusal to see this merely reflects their own subjectivism. But allowing themselves to be ruled by subjective feelings rather than by the objective requirements of the movement fans all the ultra-left dogmatism and sectarianism of the current period. The subjective notion that the CLP, the RCP or the OL are the party grants license to issue pronouncements with the authority that "the party" has earned by its vanguard status, and to excommunicate others out of the legitimate revolutionary movement as "anti-party forces."

One wonders if the obsessive party building enthusiasts have an understanding of what a Marxist-Leninist party really is, or whether they maintain a Christian like messianic conception that knowing the truth and having the right name will produce salvation? The party building obsession tends to use leadership in a peculiar way. Leadership tends to mean "having, the correct line," "being correct" as in the expression "line decides everything." The analogue with the Chinese Communist Party, that started with ten or so members and came to power within twenty-five years, is frequently made. In this conception of leadership, the correct line is derived

from Peking Review or from one or another leader's/grouplet's reading of Stalin, Lenin, Mao, etc.

Lenin was of two minds on the question of the role of the relation between consciousness and spontaneity;

Class political consciousness can be brought to the workers only from without, that is only from outside the economic struggle, from outside the sphere of relations between workers and employers. (Lenin, What Is To Be Done?, 1902)

. . . the economic struggle, the struggle for immediate and direct improvement of conditions, is alone capable of rousing the most backward strata of the exploited masses, gives them a real education and transforms them – during a revolutionary epoch – into an army of political fighters within the space of a few months. (Lenin, Lecture on the 1905 Revolution, 1906)

[summing of the experiences of 1905-1907] All classes come out into the open. All programmatical and tactical views are tested by the action of the masses. The strike struggle has no parallel anywhere in the world in extent and acuteness. The economic strike grows into the political strike, and the later into insurrection. The relations between the proletariat, as the leaders, and the vacillating, unstable peasantry, as the led, are tested in practice. The Soviet form of organization is born in spontaneous development of the struggle. (Lenin, Left-Wing Communism, 1920)

As the above questions show those that cite only the 1902 work, a product of the struggle against the very real errors of those who were anti-theory, tailed the working class and who did not understand the need for a vanguard party, represents only one side of Lenin's position on the relationship between the party and the working class. The dogmatists typically see this one side and reject the role of the working class in giving birth to revolutionary struggles and validating revolutionary theory. It is true that a vanguard party is necessary, but this party and its line grow up in a continuous two way interaction between the organization and the masses

of workers. It is not, as the dogmatists seem to have it, that first a party of ex-intellectuals is created which develops the correct line and only then do they bring the truth to the masses who then rise up. Not only can no group of ex-intellectuals, no matter how much theory they understand come up with a correct line isolated from the struggles of the working class, but even if they were able to, it would have no meaning to the working class until it was validated in their own experience and in their own lives through their own struggles. A party is not separate from the class as many dogmatists suggest. It is composed mainly of advanced workers guided by a theory which emerges in the course of working class struggles. The party and the working class struggle feed on each other, neither is a prior condition for the other's success. Each are equally necessary conditions for the growth and success of the other. "We would do well to not only study What Is To Be Done, but also Lenin's later writings such as Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder. It is indeed flattering to us, as intellectuals/ex-students to think that we can by ourselves develop a revolutionary theory which we can then bring to the masses who will see its truth and then in short order go into motion (the strategy of the CLP/RW). But in the real world, it just doesn't work. Pre-formulated theories and strategies almost never electrify the masses. There are no shortcuts. Only protracted struggle and full integration or fusion with the working class can produce a scientific theory that can truly electrify the masses.

It is the masses and not the party that makes a revolution and institutes socialism. It seems that ultra-leftists tend to forget this. The party is merely the leadership of the working class. Unless the working class and other oppressed groups and progressive people accept the party as their leader, unless they have learned through years of their own experience to respect it, an alleged party is merely a political party and not the party of the working class. Before a party can guide the revolutionary process or lead the workers to socialism, first it must come to be accepted by the workers and others as their party. Only then, once there is unity between the working class and other oppressed people and a Marxist-Leninist organization with Leninist strategy, will the two forces come to shape each

other. The organization and theory of the party will come to express the “mass line” of articulating and expressing the interests of the workers – which means change in the party from what it used to be, and that the working class will become class conscious and understand the need for revolutionary organization and strategy. The party cannot bring about socialism separated from the masses of people. Socialism can not be imposed on the working class even if it is in their interests, socialism by definition means Worker’s power, and this, of course, means the working class in alliance with others, seizing control over their own lives. No party can do this for the working class, the class must do it for itself. The role of the party is merely to inspire and guide this process.

To integrate itself with the working class means that it must win the respect of the workers by participating successfully in all the struggles of the class, i.e., it must effectively fight the battle for reforms. It must provide successful strike strategy, force the government to grant more democratic rights to workers, to grant higher unemployment benefits, to abolish discrimination against women and minorities, etc. Once it has won leadership of the daily struggles of workers it is in a position to convince the masses of workers of the need for a qualitative transformation in society and to successfully guide that struggle. It can not win leadership by haranguing against reformism from the sidelines of mass struggles.

The strategy and lines of a Marxist-Leninist party in the U.S. must come out of its own study and practice in the U.S. While much can be learned from the experiences of the Russians, Chinese, Cubans, Vietnamese, etc., no party can mechanically accept the solutions adopted by any of these parties, nor can it mechanically accept their leadership today. Since the 1950’s there has been no center to the world Communist movement. The Chinese, Koreans, Vietnamese, Albanians and many other parties publicly affirm this reality. Every Party must arrive at its analysis and line on the basis of its own study and practice and can not wait until Moscow, Peking, Havana, etc., issues a proclamation. The fact that so many “revolutionaries” don’t know what to make of a situation until they read Peking Review is a sad comment on the state of the left. The errors of the

flunkyism towards the Soviet Union of the 1940s and 1950's are being repeated all over again with results at least as disastrous as the early experience. "China's little helpers" have gone even farther than the mechanical applicers of the Soviet line ever did by denouncing revolutionary regimes, e.g., Cuba and Angola.

The world Marxist-Leninist movement is multi-centered and will remain so until the revolution has triumphed throughout the entire world. The American M-L movement must respect and learn from all the other parties – the Soviets, Cubans, Vietnamese, Chinese, Albanians, etc. It is not our job to either publicly criticize or imitate any of them. We must refuse to fully side with either the Soviet Union or China, doing what we can to restore some measure of unity to the world M-L movement, and not letting battles between the two leading socialist countries disrupt the unity of the U.S. left.

2. Unity, United Fronts and Popular Fronts

Unity is the Left's greatest weapon. Solidarity is the basis of working class strength. These elementary facts must not be forgotten. Standing together we cannot be beaten, fractionated we can not win.

There are three distinctive degrees of working together which must be recognized, in turn appropriate for relations among Marxist-Leninists; between Marxist-Leninists and left and center social democratic groups which are in good part based, or have the real potential of being based, in the working class; and between socialist groups with a real or potential working class basis and other progressive forces primarily of a petty bourgeois nature.

The theory of the Popular Front as endorsed by the Comintern's 7th World Congress maintains that the united front of working class organizations should establish a principled unity of action program with non-working class organizations in pursuit of common goals against the bloc of forces organized by monopoly capital. This notion of Popular Front has since 1934 remained an essential idea within both the pro-Soviet and pro-Chinese

Communist movements. It is an essential part of the Maoist idea of an alliance of four classes in the Third World countries and three classes in the advanced capitalist countries, and it is an essential part of the Soviet Marxist idea of anti-monopoly coalitions. It should be remembered that the Chinese Communist Party came to power as part of a Popular Front containing a number of progressive bourgeois parties which continue to exist in China today. The propensity of European Maoists to achieve unity of action with anti-C.P. groups should also be noted. The differences between the two approaches has to do with the focus of the unity of the Popular Front, the role of the Communist Party within it, and the expectations for how much such a front can accomplish (total socialist transformation according to the Italian Party, or mere tactical gains in the case of more revolutionary tendencies). It is important to understand that although the idea of the Popular Front was first developed in response to the fascist offensive against the working class, it was put forth and it has been maintained not as a defensive strategy, as is often claimed by those that oppose it, but rather as an offensive strategy for advancing the progressive and Communist movements.

The notion of the united front has been a prominent notion in Marxist-Leninist theory since the Bolshevik Revolution. The Bolsheviks themselves initially came to power in a united front with the Left-Social Revolutionaries.' A united front means unity of action among those parties and organizations based in the working class and reflective (in however a distorted manner) of working class interests. This has meant socialist and communist unions, parties and youth organizations co-operating on projects which they can agree on in pursuit of distinctively working class goals. A united front is of necessity tighter than a popular front because its class basis, and hence political unity, is greater. In the Comintern's 1934 statement on Popular Fronts, the united front is seen as playing the leading role within the Popular Front. Within the united front the various parties and organizations remain free to offer comradely and principled criticism of each other, i.e., they are not required to suppress discussion of their disagreements, but such discussion of disagreements must be

subordinated to what the parties have in common – joint action towards an important working class goal.

In the 1928-1934 period in the history of the international Communist movement, another conception of what the united front means was predominant. This conception has continued to be discussed and occasionally manifests itself in the position of one or another small group. In this period the notion of “united front from above” or a coalition of working class organizations, was counterposed to the notion of “united, front from below” which meant getting the rank and file supporters of non-Communist led organizations to work with the Communist Party, i.e., to transfer their allegiance “from their social democratic “mis-leaders ”to the Communist Party. What the R.C.P. calls the “united front” is actually the notion of a “popular front from below” i.e., the idea that various classes such as the petty bourgeoisie will follow the leadership of the working class as manifested in the R.C.P. The notion of united front from below amounts to: the same thing as unprincipled recruiting from social democratic organizations, and as such provokes counter reactions and considerable sectarianism.

The theory of united front from below failed to comprehend that workers support social-democratic leadership because they still believe in it, rather than because they are deceived. Such workers resent unprincipled attacks on people who they themselves have elected and support. The abysmal failure of the united front from below strategy, which undermined working class unity, and tended to isolate the Communist movement bore its fruit in facilitating the rise of Fascism, The world communist movement correctly summed it up in 1934 as an ultra-left-strategy.

The idea of the united front from below was replaced by the notion of a “united front from above and below” to distinguish it from the straw man stereotype of “united front from above” used as a boogey man by proponents of the 1928-1934 “third period line.” The “united front from above and below” or simply, the united front, meant that organizational coalitions on the basis of unity of action among working class

organizations had to be formed, but that these should not be simply agreements between leaders. United fronts should also involve workers of all tendencies at all levels of their organizations and in all activities. Communist workers should go out of their way to establish and maintain friendly relations with Social Democratic workers, building the unity necessary for joint action as well as for eventual development of unity (into a single party) as social democrats realize the mistakes in their analysis.

The notions of united front and popular front have their greatest relevance for large mass based parties, but nevertheless are relevant for smaller groups, like those in America, that are based in popular struggles, Petty bourgeois and non-revolutionary ideas are reflected among progressive forces here and now as much as where the parties are massive. Many different groups have played important roles in many popular struggles, especially in the anti-war, student, anti-racist and anti-sexist and, increasingly, in the working class movement. Thus popular fronts based on the principle of unity of action with anti-imperialist pacifist or liberal democratic groups opposed to U.S. intervention, with Black nationalist or liberal groups such as the NAACP, with women's groups such as NOW, with trade union liberals such as Miller or Sadlowski are important tools in waging and winning mass struggles, advancing the cause of the working class and building both a popular movement and a revolutionary party. The Communists should strive to provide leadership (winning confidence, not impose themselves) in these struggles by the wisdom of their analysis, their dedication and hard work, and the manner in which they conduct themselves. Popular front strategy, which puts Communists in the middle of mass struggles and gives them the opportunity to win the confidence of the masses, is far more effective than the self-righteous sectarianism that separates and isolates from the mainstream of popular struggles.

Likewise, united front ("from above and below") strategy can be expected to play an increasingly important role as the presence of the left in the labor movement grows. Working with the Communist Party, NAM, and the center social democratic tendency that is bound to develop in the working class movement, is important in waging and winning working class struggles,

making the struggles waged more meaningful and central to the concerns of the working class, and giving Marxist-Leninist's the opportunity to win the respect and confidence of workers.

The progressive caucuses in American unions such as Sadlowski's in the USW or Miller's in the United Mine Workers could legitimately be interpreted as implying either united front or popular front tactics (depending on whether they are considered to be essentially social democratic working class forces or essential petty bourgeois progressive forces). Since such movements make no claim to be socialist and seem to be initiated and supported by progressive union leadership and intellectuals, more than manifesting a spontaneous rank and file rebellion, they should probably be treated with popular front tactics, thus implying less unity of analysis and action than would fitting them under a united front strategy. United front tactics and strategy would be appropriate with a rank and file movement led by NAM or the CP with which we would have considerably greater unity of analysis, and hence of action.

The general justification for the theory of the popular and united fronts is articulated better by Mao Tse-tung than perhaps anyone else. In his important essay *On Contradiction*, written three years after the Seventh Comintern Congress that adopted the popular front strategy, to elaborate on its meaning for the struggle of the Chinese, Mao articulated the centrality of the notion of principle contradiction, i.e., the idea that at any given time there is one primary enemy which implies that all forces which are in opposition to the "principle aspect of the primary contradiction" must unite to overcome it. For Mao in 1937 this meant a popular front with the Kuomintang and a coalition with U.S., French and British imperialists, as well as working to win over the rich peasants, small shopkeepers, intellectuals, national bourgeoisies, and even the comprador bourgeoisies tied to British, French and American interests, in order to strike the death blow against Japanese imperialism. The great power of the Comintern notion as articulated by Mao in his *On Contradiction* was demonstrated in first the defeat of the Japanese, then in the defeat of the Kuomintang, and finally in the triumph of proletarian power as each of principle aspects of

the principle contradiction was in turn isolated and destroyed under the leadership of the Communist Party which utilized popular and united front tactics every step of the way. Mao, as did the Comintern, insisted that for united and popular front tactics to work in; advancing the long term (as opposed to just the immediate struggles) the separate identity of the Communist Party had to be maintained (which includes, when appropriate, the maintenance of its own army). It must also be stressed that popular and united front tactics do not mean the liquidation of organizational and military independence, nor do they mean the suppression of all political differences, propaganda and recruitment.

The third type of unity is most relevant in a pre-party period such as that in the United States in the 1970's. It is a central problem when no one Marxist organization has assumed leadership (which means being recognized as leaders by the working class) of working class struggles. When no group has demonstrated that their analysis, strategy and program is correct through their practice. When no party has emerged from the mass struggles of the working class, revolutionary Marxist forces of necessity will always be divided among many different small groups, differing on the full range of issues which have traditionally been issues of contention in the international communist movement (as well as on personal and organizational rivalries, jealousies, resentments and fears characteristic of sectarian groups). When there has been insufficient practice to provide the basis to know which of the competing analyses and strategies is correct, when obviously sincere and hard working Communists rooted in working class and progressive struggles find themselves scattered among many small groups and tendencies, when none of the various competing small Marxist-Leninist groups are leading many working class struggles, when no one is growing rapidly within the working class because of the leadership they are providing, then it is clearly a "pre-party" period. By "pre-party period" is meant a period in which the working class does not have a vanguard organization which is actually leading its struggles. What is meant by a vanguard is an organization which has gained the respect and confidence of the workers and actually provides guidance which Workers

accept en masse. It makes absolutely no difference if various groups declare themselves to be the vanguard, and even if one of the self-declared vanguard groups in fact has a correct analysis. No one can be the vanguard or leading force (by definition) until that group is recognized as such by the working class and actually is providing the leadership in its real struggles (not just to a few minor actions that the “vanguard” defines as the true struggles).

In such a pre-party period revolutionary cadre who will for the most part all be in the working class party once the struggles of the working class give birth to it, are scattered among a wide range of competing organizations and tendencies. In such a period a wide range of differing competing organizations and strategies is not only inevitable (since no one has the practice on which to scientifically show that one line or another is valid), but also a good thing in that it provides a diversity of valid experiences which can be summed up, and facilitates the development of viable strategies by the trial and error method of competition among strategies. As one group, or more likely a few groups, beings to take off has increasing success in recruiting workers, leading struggles and modifying its positions in the course of growth, while the rest of the groups remain stagnant and isolated, this will provide the basis on which to judge the correctness of the lines of various groups. If all serious revolutionaries were united in one centralized organization in a pre-party period this could well prove to be a major hindrance and block the development of a revolutionary movement since only one analysis and strategy could be tried out at a time, and thus very likely much valuable time wasted, before a correct strategy was hit on. With many competing groups, however, each trying different things at the same time, it is more likely that one will hit on successful practice, and then that the dedicated cadre in other organizations will take note and pressure for organizational mergers, or if this fails, defect to the pre-party group that is actually developing itself into the party, i.e., is in fact coming to be regarded as a leading force by the working class itself. Thus it is very important to gauge the objective conditions which determine if it is a pre-party period or not. The question of forming a single party must then

involve much more than subjective readiness to submit to a single democratic centralism. Because none of us has the practical basis to say that our line is correct and that the others are wrong, because obviously sincere and dedicated revolutionaries are in a wide variety of organizations, and because most of us will find ourselves in the same organization one day, we must strive for a higher degree of unity among our various groups, than need be the case in either popular or united front tactics. Since the unity of our analysis (the principles of dialectical materialism, historical materialism, class struggle, surplus value, dictatorship of the proletariat and Leninist organizational forms) is so much greater than with center social democratic or petty bourgeois progressive forces, our unity of action can and should be at a much higher level than with center social democratic and petty bourgeois groups. Our mutual disagreements must be subordinated to our common purpose, with the understanding and humility that any of us could be right, and that we mostly all will eventually merge on the basis of who sever practice eventually proves the most successful. Until the working class itself decides the issues dividing us all of our experiences are more or less equally valid. We must respect each other's practice and strategies until the working class decides otherwise.

We should strive to support each other's work in coalitions, e.g., in the antiwar movement, women's movement, anti-racist struggles and in plant and area wide working class actions. Rather than undermining each others efforts and competing with one another for support we should either respect each other's places of strength, lending support to other group's struggles so that we can all better know how a given strategy works out when given a fair chance, or work out tight unity of action programs for a given plant, area or industry as experiments in how a given strategy works out. Polemics should be comradely and supportive, truly designed to persuade rather than destroy, and should be limited to forms such as journals, whose focus is on hard core members of organizations. When talking and working with workers the strong points of one's own analysis and strategy should be emphasized, and the alleged weaknesses and failings of other groups should either not be discussed (since it gives rise

to bewilderment and disunity on the part of workers) and a drawing back from all Marxists or presented in comradely and humble terms. When twenty groups spend half of their time attacking the others the results are the same as a multi-faceted fight of twenty gladiators where only one could come out of the ring alive – mutual destruction.

The history of pre-party periods and sectarianism, however, shows that any attempt to build unity, before establishing a firm working class base as reasonable as it seems, is a pipe dream. The petty bourgeois social basis of tiny sectarian grouplets in pre-party periods necessarily drives each group into mutual antagonism to the others. The theme “line decides everything” is used to justify the rationalistic, arrogant and mutually contradictory claims that each tiny group is THE party. The competitive individualism and intellectual expertise of the ex-student cadre of these sects combines with the futility of their practice to reinforce ultra-leftism. Each of the grouplets independently comes to the conclusion that it alone has the revolutionary truth, and will therefore necessarily grow to become the leadership of the working class, in spite of the “temporary reverses” and short term failures to assume leadership of working class struggles. Their Chiliastic faith tends to immunize from the futility of their efforts and the fratricidal competition among the groups. Thus, however desirable it might be, it is unlikely that very many groups or individuals within them will see the mistake of their ways and work for a tight unity among all revolutionary forces in a pre-party period before the working class goes into motion. Nevertheless, because it is the most desirable course it must be fought for. If enough of us try there is a real chance that enough unity can be created to have a real effect in actually developing a revolutionary organization.

The most likely scenario is that once two or three groups distance themselves from the rest on the basis of leading mass struggles then these two or three groups will realize the necessity of working tightly together, while preserving their organizational autonomy until such time as it is really clear which line is correct (at which time they would merge into one). The final merger might not actually occur until, or even after, a revolution. In the meantime the minority of revolutionary groups,

tendencies and individuals that see the importance of unity should form a revolutionary center which has a good chance of being the locus for the development of the party, or at least one of the two or three groups which may eventually merge into the party. The importance of tight unity among revolutionary forces becomes all the greater as we grow in size and centrality to the working class struggle. The needs of the working class for centralized and coordinated leadership does not allow of organizational rivalries which can wreck struggles. The increasing working class composition of our organizations will thus necessarily force us together in ever greater solidarity until eventually full organizational unity is achieved.

3. The Role of the Petty Bourgeoisie

Perhaps the most central fact Marxist-Leninists in the advanced capitalist countries must face is our almost total failure to successfully lead a revolution in a developed capitalist country (Czechoslovakia can be considered to be the sole exception). Our failure almost becomes an embarrassment in contrast to (1) our very impressive and continuing victories in leading struggles which transform themselves into socialist revolutions in Third World countries, and (2) our theory which argues for the central revolutionary role of the industrial proletariat which has always been strongest in the most developed capitalist countries.

The Comintern in the 1920's developed a revolutionary analysis and strategy which has successfully guided the Chinese, Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian revolutions. This analysis has been most helpful in the development of liberation movements in Guinea-Bissau, Angola and Mozambique as well as the struggles of many other movements in the Arab world, Black Africa, Latin America and South and South Eastern Asia. The theories of the four class alliance against imperialism and its domestic allies together with the companion two stage theory of revolution (new democratic, then socialist), both under the leadership of the Communist Party, has inspired Third World revolutionaries to build national liberation fronts which have been able to mobilize the broad masses of their people

(of virtually all classes) behind a revolutionary struggle which develops into socialism. In good part our failure in the advanced countries can be seen as a result of our inability to develop a comparable approach there. Unlike, as in the Third World, we have not normally been able to capture the enthusiasm of all segments of the masses of people and mobilize them behind the proletariat to make a socialist revolution. While in many countries such as France, Finland, Italy and perhaps Greece, Spain, Portugal and Iceland we have been able to win hegemony in the industrial working class, we have been (except in Czechoslovakia) unable to break through to gain the support among the majority of the politically active masses of people which is necessary to make a successful revolution against the capitalist class – a class which has a virtual monopoly on weapons, the media, money, communications, transportation, etc. It should be noted that the period of greatest growth of most of the European parties was in the period of anti-fascist resistance when they were able to use national oppression to mobilize wide segments of the population. The electoral strength of the Communist and left social democratic parties in the above European countries tends to stabilize at around 25-30% of the total (except in Italy where increasingly reformist policies have resulted in a growing share of the vote), while revolutionary crises such as Portugal 1975 and France 1968 produce as much popular mobilization (primarily among the petty bourgeoisie, lumpen and marginal workers) against revolutionary transformation as the revolutionaries do for it (in the working class). The growth of the Marxist-Leninist movement in the advanced capitalist countries has apparently reached a barrier. In part our failure can be attributed to the fact that a serious enough crisis has yet to develop in European society, but in part our failure must be attributed to our inability to mobilize the petty bourgeoisie behind a revolutionary program since there have been major and prolonged crises in the last sixty years which were not taken advantage of. If we are to take advantage of a crisis to make a revolution (crises such as the great depression of the 1930's or the war induced crises of 1917-1921 and 1944-1948) we must be able to mobilize the whole people behind the leadership of the working class.

While the key and leading role in any revolution (whether in the Third World or in the advanced capitalist countries) must be played by the working class, to maintain in either part of the world that this class can make the revolution essentially by itself is to deny it the vanguard role that Marxist-Leninists have traditionally seen it playing. This mistake, whether in the Third World or in the advanced countries, has been traditionally an error made by those Lenin called “Left-Wing Communists”.

4. Marxist-Leninist Theory and the Modern History of Petty Bourgeois Movements

Lenin’s argument that Communists must appeal to all segments of the people including the petty bourgeoisie was meant to apply both to Third World countries that had not yet achieved a democratic revolution and to the most advanced capitalist countries with parliamentary forms:

It cannot be too strongly-maintained that this is still not Social Democracy, that the Social-Democrat’s ideal should not be the trade union secretary, but the tribune of the people, who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it appears, no matter what stratum or class of people it affects; who is able to generalize all these manifestations and produce a single picture of police violence and capitalist exploitation; who is able to take advantage of every event, however small, in order to set forth before all his socialist convictions and his democratic demands, in order to clarify for all and everyone the world-historic significance of the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat. .

. . We must ‘go among all classes of the population’ as theoreticians, as propagandists, as agitators, and as organisers. . . . The principle thing, of course, is propaganda and agitation among all strata of the people. The work of the West-European Social Democrat is in this respect facilitated by the public meetings and rallies which all are free to attend, and by the fact that in parliament he addresses the representatives of all classes. We have neither a parliament nor freedom of assembly; nevertheless, we are able to arrange meetings of workers who desire to listen to a Social Democrat. We

must also find ways and means of calling meetings of representatives of all social classes that desire to listen to a democrat; for he is no Social-Democrat who forgets in practice that 'the Communists support every revolutionary movement', that we are obliged for that reason to expound and emphasize general democratic tasks before the whole people, without for a moment concealing our Socialist convictions. He is no Social-Democrat who forgets in practice his obligation to be ahead of all in raising, accentuating, and solving every general democratic question. (Lenin, What Is To Be Done?) (Emphasis is Lenin's.)

This is not, of course, to claim, that the petty bourgeoisie has an equal interest in socialism with the working class, or that an equal amount of time ought to be given to working with this class, but only, as with a revolutionary solution to the national question which can succeed in making national minorities allies of the proletariat in the decisive struggle against capital, we must also offer a revolutionary solution to the petty bourgeoisie in order to turn this class into allies as well. Lenin certainly realized the vacillating nature of the petty bourgeoisie (see Left-Wing Communism, section 8), but he also understood that a revolution cannot take place until "the historically effective forces of all classes – positively of all the classes of the given society without exception – are aligned in such a way that everything has matured for the decisive battle," and goes on to argue that a successful revolution can occur only when the vacillating petty bourgeois movements and leadership have "sufficiently disgraced themselves through their practical bankruptcy" and are thus ready to follow proletarian leadership. (Left-Wing Communism, Section 10)

The basic point is, that even if, in the abstract, it would be better for the proletariat to make a pure socialist revolution without compromising and maneuvering, in the real world it is necessary for that class to have allies among national minorities, the peasantry or small farmers and the urban petty bourgeoisie if it is to succeed in its historical mission. Even where a working class represents 80% of the total population it has never been able to mobilize more than about half of its members to give even token support to revolutionary leadership because of the pervasive influence of religion,

bourgeois nationalism, cynicism, petty bourgeois strivings, drugs, etc. In addition the proletariat must contend with the bourgeoisie's virtual monopoly of the media, the schools, the army, the police, money, etc. If the petty bourgeoisie stands firmly with the capitalist class, even if it represents only 20% of the population, this is adequate to smash a revolutionary movement which has substantial support in the working class. The petty bourgeoisie not only can be mobilized to be the front line fighters of the bourgeoisie, but its considerable influence, both formally in popular organizations and informally through friendship networks, with wide segments of the working class, is often used to neutralize or win over to reaction millions of working people (remember over a million German workers belonged to the NAZI party). Winning over the petty bourgeoisie as a class has historically been and will remain as necessary to achieve a proletarian revolution as winning national minorities.

The international Communist movement once before made the nearly fatal mistake of not understanding the dual (vacillating) nature of the petty bourgeoisie and that segment of the working class [the right and center social-democrats) under its influence. Directing its appeal almost exclusively to the working class and in practice rejecting outreach to these groups, the "Third Period" of the Comintern (1928-1934) facilitated the growth of fascist movements throughout the advanced capitalist countries by isolating itself in a sectarian fashion from those it should have been reaching out to and mobilizing behind working class leadership. The 7th Comintern Congress held in 1935 analyzed these serious ultra left mistakes and developed a corrective policy encapsulated in the Congress reports of Georgi Dimitrov:

"In its agitation fascism, desirous of winning these masses to its own side, tries to set the mass of working people in town and countryside against the revolutionary proletariat, frightening the petty bourgeoisie with the bogey of the "Red peril." We must turn this weapon against those who wield it and show the working peasants, artisans and intellectuals whence the real danger threatens. We must show concretely who it is that piles the burden of taxes and imposts onto the peasant and squeezes usurious interest out

of him; who it is that, while owning the best land and every form of wealth, drives the peasant and his family from their plot of land and dooms them to unemployment and poverty. We must explain concretely, patiently and persistently who it is that ruins the artisans and handicraftsmen with taxes, imposts, high rents, and competition impossible for them to withstand; who it is that throws into the street and deprives of employment the wide masses of the working intelligentsia. (G. Dimitrov, For the Unity of the Working ..Class Against Fascism)

The international Marxist-Leninist movement thus set itself the task from which neither the Chinese nor Soviet leaning parties have wavered, of attempting to win the petty bourgeoisie to proletarian leadership against their greater enemy – the monopoly corporations. The program outlined by the 7th Congress was designed as much more than a temporary expedient to stop the growth of fascism in Europe in the 1930's, but rather as the outline of a general strategy meant to have validity until the total collapse of capitalism. Fascism was seen as a necessary outgrowth of decaying capitalism which would always tend to come to power in crisis situations unless its popular base, the petty bourgeoisie could be won by the proletariat. Dimitrov goes on to argue that American Marxist-Leninists should organize a Farmers-Workers Party which would direct itself against the "banks, trusts, and monopolies, against the principle enemies of the people" which must defend "the interests of members of the liberal professions, small businessmen and artisans" (Dimitrov, For the Unity of the Working Class...). The 7th Comintern Congress did not confuse the Popular Front, which included petty bourgeois organizations, with the united front of working class organizations which was designed to provide the leadership to the Popular Front. The point is that the interests of the proletariat required it to mobilize (not appease) the petty bourgeoisie behind an anti-monopoly front as a necessary condition for making a socialist revolution.

5. An Analysis of the Petty-Bourgeoisie As a Class

The petty bourgeoisie's most fundamental division is between its "old" and "new" sectors, i.e., the self-employed, independent small businessmen, professionals, and small farmers on the one side, and the employed professionals, scientists, and lower level management personnel on the other. Traditionally the old petty bourgeoisie was so large compared to employed professionals and lower management that it was identified, as the petty bourgeoisie. The rapid growth of corporations both in the cities and on the land over the last 100 years has, however, driven almost all of the old independent small businessmen and farmers bankrupt, forcing them to sell out to the corporations which now produce, and sell; most everything made and sold in the advanced capitalist countries. The growth and consolidation of monopoly capitalism, on the other hand, has produced the rapid expansion of a new petty bourgeoisie of scientists, university teachers, professional state workers (e.g., social workers), architects, accountants, writers, lower level managers, etc., who do not have fundamental control of corporate policies. In many ways the class interests of these two basic segments of the petty bourgeoisie are identical, but in some important ways they diverge.

Both segments of the petty bourgeoisie have the same dual antagonism to the corporate capitalist class on the one side and to the revolutionary working class on the other. While the old petty bourgeoisie's antagonism to monopoly capitalism was based on the economic competition between them, which was being won by the more efficient monopoly capitalists who were driving them into the proletariat, the new petty bourgeoisie's antagonism is based on their lack of fundamental control over the conditions of their labor and the uses of their "product" (or "service"). Scientists are not really able to determine what kind of research they will do or how their work will be used because of corporate funding and direction of their work; university teachers are under great pressure to mass produce students without raising fundamental criticisms of the way things are; social workers are forced to act like policemen; architects are made to design monstrosities rather than socially useful buildings; engineers are required to design cars which fall apart and factories that pollute, etc.

Although faulty as general analysis, it is useful to examine Serge Malle's, *Essays on the New Working Class*, Andre Gorz', *Strategy for Labor* and Thorstein Veblen's, *Engineers and the Price System*, in this context. The "new working class" of which these authors speak, however, must be realistically considered a new petty bourgeoisie. These authors suggest that this group can play a leading role in the revolutionary process, but clearly their claims must be discounted, as this group is unlikely to play any revolutionary role at all unless it follows the leadership of the working class.

There is continuing pressure on the new petty bourgeoisie to "proletarianize" the conditions of its labor (in a fashion analogous to the pressure on the old petty bourgeoisie). The teaching load of college professors and class sizes go up, architects and engineers are subjected to increasing productivity-demands, social workers must take on higher Case loads, etc. It should be noted that the material privileges of the new petty bourgeoisie have been exaggerated, the average income of employed professionals in recent years has averaged only about 30% more than that of skilled workers (comparing males only to eliminate the effect of sexism). It is also true, especially since the occurrence of a surplus of college graduates which developed in the early 1970's, that there has been considerable downward pressure on the salaries of the new petty bourgeoisie.

While the new petty bourgeoisie has fundamental antagonisms with the capitalist class that controls and pressures them, it is not initially in as desperate a situation vis-a-vis this class as is the independent petty bourgeoisie who are about to go bankrupt (except of course for those engineers and teachers, etc., who are being laid off or can't find work). This sector of the petty bourgeoisie continues to grow (although not as rapidly as before) while the old petty bourgeoisie continues to shrink. On the other hand the antagonism of the old petty bourgeoisie to the working class is far more intense than is that of the new petty bourgeoisie. As the violently anti-union efforts of small growers in California and small farmers in Northern Italy after World War I, as well as the strongly anti-union efforts of small businessmen almost everywhere[^] show* this class is very badly hurt

by unionization, which results in wage increases which this sector can only meet at the cost of profits (it can not, like monopoly businesses, pass on the Wage increases to consumers by increasing prices). This class periodically becomes violently hostile to the Communists and Socialists it sees as trying to take away the little property they have. The fact that the new petty bourgeoisie has already been “socialized” i.e., has no private property and does not directly depend on profits to survive makes a fundamental difference in their attitude about both unions and the socialization of private business (although not of course about the preservation of their own relative privileges vis-a-vis the working class). Unionization and the improvement in the conditions of workers do not adversely affect the new petty bourgeoisie (so long as they can maintain their pay differentials, which, by the way, are often geared to the increases in union settlements). Proposals for the nationalization of enterprises and the expansion of social services, and the public sector in general, not only do not hurt the new petty bourgeoisie but positively help it by increasing its job opportunities in working for the state, raising its prestige and status by elevating the importance of the socialized sector and expanding funds available for scientific research, medicine, etc., from which it benefits. These differences between the old and new petty bourgeoisies have major implications for how these groups respond to appeals from the revolutionary left and the monopoly capitalists in a crisis situation where they are forced to side with one side or the other.

To an extent, the new petty bourgeoisie still maintains its ideal of a “third path” between monopoly capitalism and proletarian socialism as manifested in such phenomena as the “small is beautiful” trend, fighting for secure tenure for teachers and other professions and generally trying to increase job autonomy, minimize interference from administrators and owners etc., on the one hand, while preserving privileges vis-a-vis workers on the other. The general strike of professional workers in Sweden a few years ago, Whose goal was to restore the traditional pay differential with manual workers, is an important example of this latter point, as have been the various doctors strikes’ around the world. , But the ideals of the new

petty bourgeoisie are in the last analysis as much a fraud as the old Jeffersonian ideal of the old petty bourgeoisie because of the insatiable drive for greater and greater productivity and control demanded by capital. The new petty bourgeoisie, like the old, is faced in the final analysis with having to side with either the monopoly capitalists or the revolutionary proletariat. Because of the significant difference, in the conditions of work of the new petty bourgeoisie, which considerably weakens this class's traditional hostility to the proletariat in crisis situations, we can expect it to have a considerably greater likelihood of siding with the Working class which need offer much less of a threat to its immediate interests than the monopoly capitalists.

It is of course true that the goal of a socialist revolution is to begin the transformation to a communist society in which the division of labor between mental and manual work will be abolished, and thus that in the long run there can be no preservation of the privileges of the new petty bourgeoisie. But this is the long term goal of socialist revolution, not the immediate prospect. Just as the Cuban, Russian, Chinese, Vietnamese, etc., revolutions held out the promise of full and socially useful employment in fulfilling a great historical task, and only a gradual withering away of their material privileges, to their intellectuals and professionals, there is no reason that revolutions in the West will not do the same. Such an alternative may well prove to be far more attractive than the "proletarianization" offered them by the monopoly capitalists in a crisis situation. (It is unlikely, of course, that this class will move as a class in anything but a vacillating way until a revolutionary crisis forces it to choose between the two viable options.)

While the traditional opposition of the old petty bourgeoisie, because of its nature as property owners, has always been exerted against the socialization of property by a socialist revolution which would expropriate its property (e.g., the opposition of the Kulaks to collectivization in the Soviet Union), the new petty bourgeoisie has no interest in opposing full socialization by a fully socialist revolution, since it owns no productive property and, in fact in the short run, stands to gain by the increasing

opportunities socialization provides, e.g., more scientific research, creative architecture and construction, efficient cars, more money for medicine, etc. The two segments of this class can thus be expected to diverge politically at the stage of the revolutionary transformation which moves from anti-big and middle capitalism, which socialize only medium and large businesses (which is in the interest of the independent petty bourgeoisie and employed bourgeoisie), to full socialization (which is only in the interests of the employed section of the petty bourgeoisie). It is not until the third phase of a revolutionary transformation, the transition to full communism, which implies the abolition of all privilege and division between mental and manual labor, that the new petty bourgeoisie's interests diverge from those of the proletariat. This is the current stage of development in both the Soviet Union and China. The struggle between the new petty bourgeoisie and the proletariat and peasantry has been manifested in both the Chinese Cultural Revolution and in the trend towards "revisionism" (or as the Chinese say the movement towards the "restoration of capitalism") in the Soviet Union. The bureaucrats in the party, industries and state want to maintain and secure their privileges vis-a-vis the working masses and thus they resist the movement from socialism to communism, while the working masses demand progress which entails the elimination of all privileges inherent in a socialist (as opposed to communist) form of social organization. Thus what was a contradiction among the people at both the stage of the original revolution against the bourgeoisie and imperialism, as well as at the stage of full socialization, has recently, in both China and the Soviet Union, become the primary contradiction within the society. But for us to treat what has become the primary contradiction in revolutionary transformations two stages more advanced than ours as a contradiction between the people and the enemy is to make the same mistake as those left-adventurists in China and Vietnam made who treated the national bourgeoisie in their countries as part of the enemy.

The current approach to winning over the petty bourgeoisie lies not in "appeasing" them or in limiting changes so as not to offend them, but in mobilizing them to fight against monopoly capital. It would indeed be a

mistake to move slowly, so as not to offend the petty bourgeoisie, since the petty bourgeoisie is already (in a crisis situation) quite offended by the transgressions on its interests on the part of monopoly capital, and is looking for answers. Unless the left moves decisively in providing leadership to the petty bourgeoisie, this class will look elsewhere.

Temporizing only gives time to the bourgeoisie to develop its forces. The petty bourgeoisie has, if only in a self-destructive way in twentieth century fascist movements, proven its ability to support what it thinks are dramatic and sudden changes, providing it believes them in its interest. It is not inherently conservative by nature (conservative means conserving the status quo of monopoly capitalism), and thus there is no need to limit changes to appease this class. What is necessary in order to win leadership in this class is to move decisively against monopoly capital, while guaranteeing the interests of the petty bourgeoisie. Monopoly capitalism is already reducing the power, privilege and authority of this class; what the proletariat must do to win leadership of the petty bourgeoisie is to hold out the real promise of drastically reducing the power, privilege and authority of the monopoly capitalists, and then decisively carry through with the promise. In the concrete this means that a revolutionary movement must guarantee the short run preservation of small farms and businesses and promise (and live up to its promise) to promote only voluntary collectivization through education and example, while expropriating the banks and corporations, thus alleviating the financial pressure on small enterprises. It also means that the Revolutionary movement must hold out the prospect of secure and rewarding employment for professionals while promising the end of the abusive prostitution of the professionals to the profit seeking goals of capital. Further it means guaranteeing that only gradually over the course of a generation or two will they lose their privileges as the condition of everyone is greatly improved (i.e., that rather than them sinking to the level of the current proletariat, that the condition of the proletariat will be brought up). After all is it really so bad to do some physical labor under socialist conditions? The model of the Chinese promise to the Chinese national bourgeoisie, that if they supported the national democratic

revolution their wealth would not be confiscated, should be studied. It is sufficient, and actually socially necessary, that the division of labor be only gradually abolished (a sudden abolition would produce total social disruption), and thus there need be no false fear generated among the new petty bourgeoisie that their position will be destroyed overnight.

H. The Causes of Left Errors

Revolutions can only be made in times of major and prolonged social crisis such as the aftermath of serious military defeat or during a prolonged economic crisis. No party however well rooted in the working class, and no matter how good its analysis and "line" can make a revolution without such a crisis.

Communist parties are faced with a difficult task in maintaining their bearings in non-revolutionary situations. Small revolutionary groups in non-revolutionary situations, groups which tend to be composed heavily of ex-students and intellectuals (many of whom may have colonized the working class) tend to blame failures of line and analysis for their failure to grow, to engage in heated internal debates about line and to split to form separate grouplets each hostile to all the others. Sectarianism is thus the inherent characteristic of non-revolutionary periods in which the Communist movement is small. In part, the sectarianism inherent in such situations is greatly aggravated by the class basis of small Communist movements which have recruited mainly from students and the intelligensia who have joined mainly for ideological reasons (rather than because of their own oppression). The experience of such people has been one of dealing with ideas in the abstract. Ideological polemics and rationalistic debate are endemic to university and coffee house life.

The only cure for this sectarianism is the discipline imposed by workers who become involved in revolutionary struggles through necessity. Needing unity in order to survive and advance, the working class has no interest in fratricidal and abstract polemics. The scientific analysis it needs is derived

from the trial and error of practice summed up in authentic criticism-self-criticism. Only the integration of Communists into the mainstream of working class life and struggles will succeed in overcoming sectarianism.

In addition to the impeding effects of the petty-bourgeois basis of small left groups in non-revolutionary situations the special traditions of both American society and police provocation and manipulation play important roles in promoting sectarianism, dogmatism and ultra-leftism among American Marxists.

American radicals who like to think of themselves as freed from the values of American capitalist civilization deceive themselves. The wine of Marxism-Leninism is being poured into the old bottles of individualism. We are so conditioned to trust no one, to get all we can, and to give as little as we can, to think of ourselves first, to be self-righteous when convinced of something, to distrust collective activity and to lack faith in others, that all these aspects of individualism are manifested with a vengeance in the internal life of the American left. Once someone or some group becomes convinced that it has the correct interpretation all hell breaks loose, minor differences which are resolvable through comradely struggle and practice become magnified into fundamental differences of principle worth splitting or destroying organizations about. Our comrades come to be seen as the "road-blocks to revolution" which must be smashed before progress can be made.

The endemic divisiveness of the American left is consciously promoted by police agents who consciously use divisive tactics in order to tear left wing organizations apart thus destroying the potency of the left. The tactic of infiltrating left organizations, and once in a position of some respect, to side with minority factions, or to develop factions, which oppose the dominant tendencies whatever they might be, is a time tested police and wrecker tactic. The point is to promote disunity and distrust of the leadership, prevent it merging within similar organizations, if possible split the organization, and consequently demoralize as many leftists as possible. Such tactics were adopted by the American FBI in the 1960's to deal with

the rising new left; and Black power movements.

Under legal pressure from the Socialist Workers Party and some Black organizations, the FBI is being gradually forced to reveal the details of its program to destroy the New Left and Black radical groups in the period 1967-1971. (See the 1,000 pages of testimony and documents issued by the U.S. Senate's Select Committee to Study Government Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, Vol. 6, The F.B.I., 1976.): Agents were sent into Black organizations to disrupt and prevent their merger and growth. Agents sent into militant nationalist organizations emphasized the impossibility of working with whites and those sent into organizations like the Panthers emphasized the impossibility of working with cultural nationalists. Unsigned letters accompanied by fake police reports were sent to various radical organizations implicating one or another of their leaders as police agents. The radical organizations were led to believe that such information was being provided them by sympathizers in the FBI or local police when actually it was being sent as part of an overall destructive strategy. The Panthers and U.S. in California were provoked into violent warfare. The FBI tactics used on at least one predominantly white group – the Socialist Worker's Party, have been exposed in great detail – do the Maoist groups think that they are so much less dangerous to the ruling class that the secret police has not bothered giving them the same treatment. When the full facts become known we are very likely to find that there has been wide scale infiltration and disruption of the entire left from the mid-sixties until today. It is not unlikely that the FBI played a major role in the destruction of SDS in 1969, in the split in the Panthers at about the same time, and in most of the splits and antagonisms of the Maoists during the mid-1970's.

I. A Call For the Regroupment of the US. Left

Almost all of the various left tendencies and groups in the U.S. are composed of mostly well intentioned revolutionaries. The sectarianism,

idealism, dogmatism, reformism and tailism of the various groups is a product of the failure of the left to be fully integrated into mass struggles and the resultant intellectualized polemics and religious sect like enthusiasm that are its consequence. When practice can't decide, when the mass line is not operative, when ex-student cadre are unable to get real feedback and criticism from the struggles of working people, a mess like the one we have today is the inevitable result. The failure of all lines in the mass struggle turns us inward to blame each other and faculty lines for our problems, thus promoting splits and ultra-sectarianism.

The development of splits and the evolution of sects has produced a parallel evolution in the different traditions. When the SWP first broke off from the CP the differences between the two groups were as clear as the differences between the SP and CP when they went their separate ways. However, as groups broke off both the SWP and the CP and splits within each split developed, groups with very different histories tended to converge on similar lines. This parallel evolution is very similar to the parallel evolution of Australian Marsupials and mammals in the rest of the world. Even though the two animal phylum have long evolved separately the similar environment of Australia, and much of the rest of the world resulted in the development of similar species more or less equally adopted to their ecological niches in similar environments. Thus, out of the history of splits in the SWP emerged the Spartacus League which in virtually all things is identical to the PLP which emerged out a split from the CP. About the only principled difference between the two groups is that the first hangs pictures of Leon Trotsky on their walls while the second hangs pictures of Stalin. Both are ultra-left purest groups which refuse to work with or give support to progressive movements and Socialist countries because they are allegedly not revolutionary enough. Both have an ultra-left standoffish line on all existing progressive nationalist, feminist and trade union movements. Even the CP and the SWP itself have taken a parallel course in focusing their work on reformist non-militant mass organizations such as the peace movement, liberal trade unions (the CP) and the women's movement (the SWP) rather than presenting a revolutionary face.

The ultra hostile sectarianism of the tiny grouplets which have broken off from the SWP and from the various break-offs from that group is more or less exactly paralleled by the ultra-sectarianism of the various groups which have developed in the “Maoist” movement. Outside of the OL and the RCP, the two more or less Maoist groups in the U.S, with more than a miniscule following, the primary focus of their papers and polemics is attacks on the OL, the RCP or oh each other. The product of these ultra-dogmatic Maoist groups who fight about who really represents the true thought of Mao Tse-tung is thus identical to that of the ultra-Trotskyist groups that focus their venom on the SWP, or their various parent splinters from the SWP. Here the primary fight is on which group really represents the true Fourth International. Just as the various Trotskyist grouplets condemn each other for deviating from true Trotskyist principles, the various ultra Maoist groups accuse each other of “revisionism” – which means absolutely nothing more than deviating from their interpretation of Mao Tse-tung and Stalin’s thought. In neither the ultra-Trotskyist groups or in the ultra-Maoist groups does practice or scientific investigation of concrete conditions play the slightest role in settling disagreements. All polemics and further splits (issues are never settled in an amicable way so as to produce unity) are handled in a purely idealist and rationalist manner with quotes being thrown back and forth as weapons to legitimate or delegitimize various positions, each as unsubstantiated by practice as the other. The futility of the whole exercise is apparent to everyone but the handful of participants. Differences are maintained for historical reasons and because of personal and organizational hostilities and jealousies and continue to exist because of the lack of rootedness in mass struggles. A working class mass revolutionary movement would not stand for the narrow minded sectarianism of the ex-student left and would force all honest revolutionaries into one organization forcing the resolution of differences on the basis of practice, criticism, democratic centralism and mutual respect.

Groups like the MIR in Chile should serve as a model of what the development of a revolutionary left in the U.S. would look like. Young

people who had been militants in the Socialist Party, the Communist Party and the Trotskyist movement joined with pro-Chinese and pro-Cuban activists and other independent revolutionaries to form an organization devoted to assuming leadership of mass struggles, learning from all of the revolutionary traditions (including Trotsky, Stalin, Fidel and Mao), without identifying with any single historical tradition. They developed their theory and strategy on the basis of practice and mutual respect for the traditions of each of its components. The maxim of the organization has been to learn what can be learned from the experience of each and apply these lessons to the special conditions of Chile as determined through the practice of the organization. The MIR thus represented a radical break with the ever increasing irrelevance and sectarianism of both the Trotskyist and Maoist traditions. In good part it was inspired by the struggles of the Cubans; but by no means did it mechanically accept ideological guidance from Cuba. In spite of its insistence that positive things could be learned from the writings and experience of Trotskyism, the MIR represented a radical break from the essentials of Trotskyism (idealism, ultra-leftism, hostility to national liberation movements) and in no sense of the term can be called "trotskyist." Likewise, although it gave critical support to the Allende regime, it can in no way be called "revisionist" since it actively combatted the illusion sometimes encouraged by the Popular Unity government that a gradual transition to socialism would be possible without military hegemony. Although great admirers of the accomplishments of the Chinese, the MIR clearly has not tailed their foreign policy and in no sense is Maoist.

The reconstitution of the U.S. revolutionary left would very likely include a merger of individuals, organizations and, small groups dropping out of the existing sects joining with independent individuals and local collectives to form a new organization somewhat on the model of the Chilean MIR, an organization which would start with a moderate level of unity and discipline and gradually tighten up on the basis of its involvement in mass struggles and sum ups of its own practice (as the basis on which to resolve the political differences which obviously will be imported into such an

organization).

1. Seven Revolutionary Currents

The major thrust of the student movement of the 1960's which gradually developed into Maoism: the RCP, the OL and the myriad of tiny ultra-Maoist groups is likely to in good part disintegrate, with many of its highly energetic and revolutionary members increasingly realizing the dead-end of the policies that have developed since the beginning of the 1970's. The hyper optimism of these groups which have believed that they would rapidly grow and integrate themselves into the working class, as well as in the imminent awakening of the mass revolutionary struggle, should be expected to more or less quickly dissipate with the stagnation of their movement. The resultant demoralization should force many of the members of these grouplets to reevaluate and drop out as individuals or groups. Many will be looking for a non-dogmatist revolutionary approach which does not, require isolation from most progressive and revolutionary struggles. These people should mostly develop non-dogmatic anti-reformist politics.

The consolidated sect like nature of the PLP and most Trotskyist groups is not (yet) characteristic of the Maoist groups (as sectarian as they might be in their polemics and relationship to other progressive and revolutionary forces). Maoist groups are still new and are composed mainly of young highly energetic people with very optimistic Expectations about short term successes. Their membership is consequently considerably more open to changing positions as a result of failures in practice, as well as to actively rooting themselves in struggles from which they can learn from the working class and thus break out of their sectarianism. They also have the important advantage of looking to China and the thought of Mao Tse-tung rather than to Leon Trotsky or even Stalin for leadership. Such works by Mao Tse-tung as *On Practice*, *On Contradiction*, *Where Do Correct Ideas*

Come From, On Rectifying the Party's Style of Work, etc., as well as the whole history of the Chinese Communist Party's coming to power (with the ongoing and sharp struggle waged by Mao Tse-tung against dogmatism and sectarianism) can not but have a positive effect helping to defuse dogmatism and sectarianism in at least those Maoist groups that are rooted in the working class. Thus many Maoists can be expected to turn away from a dogmatic: Maoism and back towards a non-dogmatic/anti-revisionist path.

Major developments have already occurred among Maoists over the last two years which shows the potential for reversing their course towards complete isolation and consolidated sectarianism. The key event in this trend has been the opposition of the Guardian newspaper, the most influential pro-China Marxist periodical in the U.S. to Chinese foreign policy (especially in Angola and Cuba). Other important developments in this trend have also been the similar opposition of the influential journal Monthly Review to the same Chinese positions and the evolution of the Communist Labor Party, away from support of Chinese foreign policy and towards a more independent line supportive of Cuba, Vietnam, etc. As significant has been the formation of the Bay Area Communist Union, which while supporting Chinese foreign policy emphasizes anti-dogmatism in everything else, and the development of an anti-dogmatic/anti-revisionist national tendency in good part initiated by the Philadelphia Workers Organizing Committee and supported by a number of local independent Marxist-Leninist groups formerly identified as "Maoist." Indeed the initiative for and kernel of a non-dogmatic/anti-reformist Communist movement and party in the U.S. will almost certainly come from these tendencies which are now in the process of separating themselves from Maoism.

Another input into a reorganized and unified revolutionary left might well be the youth group of the Communist Party – the Young Worker's Liberation League (or a major split from it) together with some of the younger more energetic and least mechanically pro-Soviet CP (especially younger Third World) members who would leave the CP out of frustration with its reformism, accommodating liberal attitudes, general lack of energy and

discipline, and its apologetic attitude to the Soviet Union and knee-jerk hostility to China. Such a major split from the CP would most likely be motivated by the involvement of its younger members in working class and Third World struggles, and their resultant realization of the bankruptcy of CP policy as a revolutionary line. It is important to realize that the CP has been recruiting young Third World workers as well as ex-student radicals who can not relate to the sterile sectarianism of Maoist groups and want to do political work, but have no strong commitment to defending the Soviet Union or to reformism as a matter of principle. These people are likely to be the basis of a split to the left in the CP, as well as a continuing source of recruitment into a non-dogmatic/anti-reformist organization. There should thus be a convergence of these folks with those that are becoming disillusioned with Maoism.

We should expect some participants in the Trotskyist tradition to likewise converge on a anti-dogmatic/anti-reformist politics. The most promising organization in this tradition other than the Worker's World Party/Youth Against War and Fascism is the International Socialists who are fairly well integrated in working class struggles (as left groups go), and in spite of their general condemnation of all socialist regimes as "bureaucratic collectivist" show a certain openness, seriousness, flexibility and, willingness to learn from practice absent among most Trotskyist groups. The youth group of the SWP, the YSA, should also be expected to provide some individual recruits to a non-dogmatic anti-reformist position, if only because its rather loose nature and absence of hyper sectarian polemics (which set the SWP as well as the IS and WWP off from the rest of the Trotskyist groups) attracts many serious youth new to Marxism, who then tend to go on to other things as they realize the isolation and bankruptcy of the SWP. The YSA/SWP has and may continue to serve as a transmission belt of students from liberalism to Marxist-Leninism.

The dissipated remnants of the "new left" tendencies of the late 1960's: the Weather underground, Prairie Fire, Venceremos and the various groups attracted to "Third Worldism," the romanticism of guerrilla warfare and the revolutionary potentialities of Youth Culture, have all shown a substantial

evolution towards Marxist-Leninism, and a growing appreciation of the leading role of the working class over the last few years. These groups have tended to avoid the sectarianism and polemics of the Trotskyists, Maoists and the CP, in part because reacting more on an emotional level to give support to, oppressed people they never bother to learn the fine points that divide the left, and in part because they sense the futility of it all, being somewhat more rooted in the real struggles of Third World peoples in the U.S. and around the world (and in many cases of having had recent experience as leaders of a mass student movement as well). While the Weather Underground Organization/Prairie Fire seems to have virtually disappeared the National Labor Federation, an outgrowth of the old Venceremos which renounced the romantic and adventurist tendencies of that organization in favor of patient organizing in the poorest segments of the working class, is growing, and shows promise of becoming an important force on the revolutionary left. The dedication, enthusiasm, flexibility and non-sectarianism of these tendencies may well prove to be a valuable contribution to the development of an anti-dogmatist/anti-revisionist movement if the last remnants of romanticizing guerrilla warfare, Third Worldism and optimism about youth culture are left behind. It can be expected that the mainstream of these tendencies and groups will for the most part go into such an organization, with only a minority refusing due to the stubborn persistence of "New Leftist" ideals.

A major source of recruits for an anti-reformist/anti-dogmatic trend is to be found in the Marxist-Leninist currents among Third World people – this current may prove in the intermediate run to provide the greatest single source of energy and recruits. During the 1970's there has been a considerable turn among Blacks, Latins and Asians in the U.S. away from nationalism and towards Marxism-Leninism, e.g., the Black Panthers, Amiri Baraka's African People's Congress, the Black Workers' Congress/League of Revolutionary Black Workers and their successor organizations and influences, the August 29th Movement, La Casa, The Puerto Rican Socialist Party, the KDP, El Komite, etc. Indeed it is only among segments of Third World workers that Marxism-Leninism has any real working class roots in

the U.S. in the 1970's. Unfortunately, for the most part, the Third World revolutionary trends are as divided, sectarian, and dogmatic as those based in the ex-student and predominantly white M-L groups. As some of these groups grow they will experience greater and greater pressure from their constituencies to work together and to unify with each other as well as with the movement outside of Third World communities. A revolution is impossible only among Blacks or Chicanos, and requires the leadership of a multiracial Communist Party. It is absolutely essential that any developing revolutionary party/pre-parties in the U.S. keep the closest relations with the various groupings arising among Third World workers and intellectuals. Likewise, it is essential that Third World revolutionaries seek out the closest of ties with the rest of the revolutionary left.

A sixth stream of recruits for a non-dogmatic anti-reformist tendency can be expected to be found in the Marxist-Feminists and the Marxist gay movement. These two closely related movements have adamantly rejected the dogmatist currents which mechanically interpret and apply what they see to be the Chinese line on the family and homosexuality. They insist on central attention being given to interpersonal relations within a generally Marxist revolutionary framework which sees the working class struggle as key and China, Vietnam and Cuba as inspirations. The sectarian and dogmatic attitude of most of the rest of the revolutionary left towards these people (the policies of much of the Trotskyist left being an exception) has kept these tendencies separate from the rest. These people are increasingly realizing their impotence as long as they remain isolated and insist on the primacy of their sexual concerns. They are increasingly realizing the correctness of a working class perspective and the need for a Leninist party as well as the necessity of merging their movement into a broader working class based force. We can thus expect much of this movement to become part of the non-dogmatist/anti-reformist current, although undoubtedly many of the current participants in this current will draw back because of their unwillingness to de-emphasize what has been seen as the primacy of sexual freedom, flaunting gayness and mechanical attacks on male chauvinism.

A seventh stream of people can be expected to join from the vaguely revolutionary and weakly organized social democratic movements of which NAM is the most prominent, but which also including groups like the Wisconsin and Northern California Alliances.

Many members of these groups will probably end up consolidating behind a reconstituted social democratic organization and party, but many can be expected to see the futility of the new left organization and strategies which have been part of NAM since its founding. NAM is not a consolidated social democratic organization, which as a matter of principle condemns all Communist led movements and organizational forms and strategies. NAM generally is a strong supporter of China, Cuba and Vietnam, for example, and many of its members consider themselves to be "communists." NAM people also almost universally consider themselves to be hostile to the Social Democratic Parties of Europe, although recently there has been considerable interest generated by the reformist developments in the French and Italian Parties. Excitement has been generated by the "Gramscian" development of the Australian Communist Party (which has been emphasizing a policy of mass struggles which challenge the hegemony of the bourgeoisie, rather than piece meal parliamentary reforms). NAM being a very loose organization contains a wide assortment of people which include an anarcho-syndicalist/anti-Leninist current (represented by people such as Stanley Aronowitz) and a mere traditional center social democratic tendency which emphasizes electoral campaigns and work in mass organizations (represented by many associated with Socialist Revolution, and James Weinstein), as well as those generally oriented to watered down Leninism, It is unlikely that either the anarcho-syndicalist (Aronowitz tendency) or the center social democratic tendency whose ideal is reconstruction of the pre-1919 Socialist Party would merge into a new anti-dogmatic/anti-reformist organization, but the Gramscian tendency and other vaguely Leninist orientations are a likely candidate, since they converge with the other currents on a flexible revolutionary strategy and more disciplined organization form.

The recent adoption of a Leninist organizational form by the Wisconsin Alliance seems to indicate that groups like this are likely to converge with the other currents. Many independent Marxist (non-anti-Communist) intellectuals such as much of the membership of the URPE, NACLA, HEALTH-PAC, etc., can also be expected to be attracted to a non-dogmatic anti-reformist organization once it is created.

The Progressive Labor Party (as well as most explicitly Trotskyist groups) is unlikely to provide recruits to a non-dogmatic non-reformist trend since having been around for so long the people that have remained in it seem to be pretty consolidated and isolated from outside influences. The major split from the PLP which occurred a few years ago in New England, with the formation of the Party for Worker's Power, which took most of PLP's New England cadre, took many of the more rooted, flexible people out of the organization. The PWP although it still shares much of the idealistic and sectarian line of the PLP is a more likely candidate for merger into a new anti-dogmatic current. By this time most PLP members have undoubtedly internalized the classical Trotskyist syndrome characteristic of groups like the Spartacus League as well as of the ancient Socialist Labor Party, of isolation from mass struggles, inner directedness, and impermeability from outside criticism or the failure of practice. In other words, like the SLP and the Trotskyists before it, it has hardened into a religious type sect content with preserving the purity of doctrine instead of leading revolutionary struggle. Such groups can be expected to be unaffected by any developments in the rest of the left up to and including an actual working class revolution, an event they'll undoubtedly dismiss, only to be in turn dismissed by it. Only a few individuals within the hardened Trotskyist organizations can be expected to be won over once the future revolutionary party has clearly established a leading role in mass struggles.

The model presented here of a convergence among seven different tendencies differs fundamentally from that put forth by all sectarians. The sectarians, whether OL, RCP, CLP, CP, SWP, PLP, IS or whoever, think that the line of their own small group will sooner or later prove its correctness, and that large numbers of working class and other oppressed peoples will

then join their respective organizations. They each see the members of other organizations as pretty much hopeless and irrelevant to the revolutionary process. In fact just about all tendencies are just about equally relevant/irrelevant at this point, each more or less reflecting the real material conditions, i.e., the class basis of their participants and the non-crisis conditions of American capitalism. As a revolutionary crisis develops and the left grows, we will find that in the short run most of the existing sects will grow more or less equally, i.e., that no sectarian group will clearly emerge as the leader of the working class. Instead, the practice of honest revolutionaries of all tendencies will lead them to see the serious blocks that sectarianism and dogmatism are putting in the way of revolutionary leadership in the working class and among other oppressed peoples. The awakening of worker's struggles will furthermore force honest revolutionaries, of various tendencies to unite in one serious revolutionary organizations, or into a few such organizations which work closely together. Thus the honest revolutionaries, who are today found in many different mutually hostile tendencies will find themselves in the same organization(s) in the future. (We should keep this fact in the forefront of our consciousness when we engage in polemics.)

An attempt to call a conference of all revolutionary tendencies (i.e., the seven forces listed above) would at this point be absolutely futile, and result in nothing more than polemics, divisiveness and demoralization. Even the suggestion of a merger of these tendencies would-today be regarded by the majority of all of them as ludicrous. But even now in all these tendencies (in some more than others) individuals and subgroups are beginning to have doubts about sectarian and dogmatic approaches, and as their various messianic expectations prove to be groundless many should become increasingly open to an anti-dogmatic/anti-sectarian analysis. Within a short time many can be expected to either force their organizations to reverse course or individually drop out and then join the growing anti-sectarian/anti-dogmatic current which is the most likely candidate for giving birth to a revolutionary party, with a real chance of winning leadership of workers' struggles. It is clear that more practice, and

specifically the successful practice of a non-sectarian/anti-dogmatic trend (i.e., the actual acceptance of it by working class people) is the necessary condition for the majority of honest revolutionary cadre, currently scattered among a great many tendencies, recognizing the correctness of the position developed here.

J. What Must Be Done

1. On the National Level

The two principle tasks facing serious revolutionaries are (1) to integrate ourselves in the struggles of the working class and other oppressed people, learning from them, molding ourselves in these struggles and win the respect and confidence of the masses; and (2) to create an organization which can unify our wisdom, experience and energies so as to effectively accomplish (1), and eventually assume the position, of leadership in working class and other progressive struggles. These two tasks are not separate and distinct processes but must occur together. Some dogmatists, e.g., the Communist Labor Party and the groups formerly associated with the Revolutionary Wing argued that the party had to be created before work among the masses could commence, since a scientific strategy and analysis had to be worked out so revolutionaries would know what to do. Others, argue that we don't need a national or a disciplined organization yet, because we are not yet sufficiently integrated into the working class, nor do we have enough experience to justify such an organization (which would have no intelligent basis on which to make strategy and which would thus get in the way of a diversified and multifaceted practice that will some day serve as the basis for the formation of such an organization). Both these latter positions are mistaken. Neither the party nor the mass movement is the precondition of the other. Both historically have grown together, shaping each other in the process. The basis for unity and strategic decisions can only come from direct and contemporary involvement in mass struggles, but struggles can

best be advanced through the leadership of organizations that are not yet the acknowledged leaders of the class.

What is thus called for is the creation of both somewhat disciplined and high energy local collectives and national organizations which do not claim or aspire to be the party, but frankly admit that they are contributing just one experience to the overall process of building a revolutionary movement and organization and at first are rather loose associations of local collectives and national organizations who share a general anti-reformist/anti-ultra-leftist perspective. This loose association can only gradually grow into a more and more disciplined body as experience is achieved in leading mass struggles, and most people sum up the meaning of their experiences in the same way. The process can not be forced as both the RCP and the OL have attempted to do. Patience is a virtue and we must take as long as necessary to achieve both the experience and consensus necessary to create an organization with a serious potential for becoming a party, i. e., which is accepted by the working class and others as the leading force in their struggles. At first a loose national association would concentrate on providing literature pamphlets, books, a journal, and perhaps a newspaper, hold regional and national conferences to allow revolutionaries to exchange experiences, and from time to time sponsor a national or regional action (on the basis of near consensus among the participating organizations). Gradually as experience was gained, and the unity of most of the people in the association rose organically on the basis of mutual trust and collective wisdom achieved on the basis of struggling together, a genuine pre-party organization would emerge. As a pre-party grouping, however, such a national center would not claim to be the only revolutionary force in the country, nor would it have a single detailed strategy which everyone had to work around. The multiplicity of experiences would still be a valuable thing since the working class has not yet come to accept the leadership of any revolutionary tendency. One of the primary thrusts of this organization will be to achieve organizational unity among all revolutionary forces, build a united front with all socialists and working class organizations and build a popular front with all progressives,

all while preparing its cadre and its supporters in the working class for the eventuality that the outcome of the decisive struggle will depend on who has military hegemony.

The task of fighting sectarianism may well prove to be equal of the tribulations of Job. Refusing to answer hostile polemics in kind, bearing accusations of revisionist, adventurist and centrist with a smile, supporting actions led by the CP, the IS, the OL and the RCP without bating an eyelash, consistently and without guilt or hesitation repeating over and over in a comradely supportive manner the argument against sectarianism, dogmatism, and ultra-leftism, can and should prove very persuasive in defeating these three banes on the working class movement. By gradually winning the respect and confidence of supporters of other tendencies through comradely behavior, even in the face of the worst insults, and through hard work in the mass movement which is bound to win us leadership of some struggles, we will turn heads around in organizations which have had nothing but failures. We should be able to win over most, or at least large numbers of, folks from the seven tendencies discussed above, thereby creating the groundwork for a healthy national organization.

2. On the Local Level

On the local level the primary task must be to build up local organizations on the model of the Bay Area Communist Union, the Philadelphia Workers Organizing Committee or the Marxist-Leninist Organizing Committees called for by the Guardian. Such local organizations must focus on the same tasks as face all serious revolutionaries in the current period. (1) integration into the working class and progressive movements, at first mainly to learn from them, but increasingly to provide revolutionary leadership, (2) overcoming sectarianism, building unity among revolutionary forces, united fronts among all socialists and working class organization and popular fronts with all progressives.

Concretely, a BACU-PWOC local Marxist-Leninist type organization must be

oriented to the tasks of building up a broad local organization, contributing to the growth of a national organization, and helping to develop the working class and other progressive struggles on the local level. Everything done must be judged by the criteria of how well a given project, strategy or tactic advances the probability of making a socialist revolution and building an organization that can lead the process of transformation. The four basic goals of a BACU-PWOC type organization should be:

(1) Agitation and propaganda in the working class to raise the level of class consciousness and understanding of what socialist revolution means. This must include participation in the mass organizations of workers (trade unions), support groups and strikes. Just as important as our contribution, and at the early stages even more important, is what we learn from integration with workers and workers struggles.

(2) Participation in other struggles which are also anti-capitalist. In these struggles, we must always keep in mind that our goal is socialist revolution. Thus, we must subtly and in a non-sectarian manner, guide these various struggles towards socialism. Success at this implies (a) comradely work styles that do not turn people off by being too advanced, pushy or sectarian, (b) offering good practical day-to-day leadership including willingness to volunteer for shit work which establishes credibility and shows that our leadership can result in small victories, (c) not hiding our Marxist-Leninism and our socialist goal. We must be above board and honest rather than manipulative. Again, especially in the early stages of our involvement in such activities what we learn is at least as important as what we can teach.

(3) Relate in an active, not a passive way, to the ongoing development of the movement in the U.S. to create a non-dogmatic, non-ultra-left, non-sectarian revolutionary organization, e.g., active participation in the center called for by the Philadelphia Workers Organizing Committee and its associated groups.

(4) Attempt to bring unity to the local anti-dogmatic, anti-ultra-left forces, building firm ties through working together, studying together, treating people with respect, supporting actions of other groups, etc., so that we

can eventually form into the nuclei of the local manifestation of a nation wide pre-party formation, and eventually in the rather distant future, into the national organization itself.

The actual development of local Marxist-Leninist groups should proceed in more or less the same manner as the development of the national center. At first people should come together to form groups which spend equal amounts of time (a) studying the classics of Marxism-Leninism, reading position papers of various groups which relate to local work analyzing local conditions, etc., and (b) discussing and evaluating the individual practice and on the job problems of various members of the groups, giving support and guidance to people where possible – without yet developing a collective practice or group discipline around external practice. Gradually, as the members of the group gain confidence in each other, lose their fears of being manipulated and forced to do something they don't want to do, and begin seeing the magnification of both wisdom and strength that joint political action gives our individual action, a collective practice can begin to develop. At first perhaps the group as a whole will do common action, e.g., participate in a picket line organized by someone else. Later, perhaps organize a demonstration or picket on their own. At the same time the informal support given individual members should organically and gradually turn into collective decision making and commitment as people gain trust in the decisions of the group and come to feel that they can be more effective, acting collectively rather than individually. Thus discipline and democratic centralism should gradually evolve on the basis of experience and growing trust. The amount of democratic centralism realistically possible in a local group, however, of necessity should be rather less than necessary in a party, since the limited experience of a local group gives only a limited basis for developing scientific lines and correct practice outside of the limited areas in which the group is involved. A high level of democratic centralism and discipline must wait until the development of a national organization with in-depth and multifaceted experience and the necessity for disciplined national actions. Too much centralization and discipline prematurely could well inhibit creative practice

and promote splits among people who do not accept the group's line and, probably rightfully, argue that the group does not have a sufficient basis to make a given decision.