

LETTER TO A MAOIST

April 6, 1971

Dear Mike,

Greetings on the 100th Anniversary of the Paris Commune!

We once took a period of time to investigate our continued participation in the revisionist CPUSA. On that occasion you took the initiative to contact me. It is only appropriate that I now return that expression of confidence and contact you...

You know of the Communist Working Collective's (CWC's) extended study into the "Trotsky-Stalin" debates. You know that what immediately prompted us into this inquiry was the unsummarized experience of the 3rd International and reservations I have had over the possibly superficial character of my "Two Public Lectures" on the nature of the Russian state (of 1936--the Stalin Constitution, and 1965--the Liberman reforms). The logic of the theoretical struggle, after repeated failures to develop a revolutionary theory, program and practice, dragged us fighting and screaming all the while toward those debates.

We have all floundered about for three years now seeking in Mao Tse Tung Thought a revolutionary alternative to the revisionists. In each instance the organizations we have encountered, worked with, or joined (with the exception of the "Old Collective" to which I will return) have all belittled the struggle for theory and disdained scientific inquiry. The party crisis manifested itself as a crisis of method. The methodological crisis, in turn, veiled political bankruptcy. These groups proved unable to supercede the "anti-monopoly coalition". The old soup was forever dished up with new spices. The fundamental theoretical bankruptcy of all the parties and groupings which consider themselves in the tradition of the 3rd International, that is, in the tradition of Stalin, has become increasingly apparent to us. The entire panoply of these groups adopted, in a most pragmatic way, one or another of the theses of the 6th and 7th Congresses of the C.I.

PLP AND RU

The theory of social fascism and the united front from below, adopted by the 6th World Congress, laid the basis for the defeat of the German proletariat in 1933. The German party approached a divided working class and widened the divisions enabling Hitler to come to power. Today PLP has picked up bits and pieces of this disastrous policy. PL's Trade Union program pitting the rank and file against the union leadership and now bypassing the unions altogether is a modern variant of the united front from below thesis. The extreme sectarianism of this line is only matched by the economism of the rank and file program which separates the minimum and maximum program of the party in the fashion of the 2nd International. PL, without a shred of strategic thought, totally avoids the struggle for the political independence of the class. Instead, it narrowly builds its own organization and eclectically tacks on the "dictatorship of the proletariat" to each leaflet and article. The theory of social fascism which places a revisionist trend within the working class on a par with fascism has crept into their program through the Chinese analy-

sis of the Soviet state (a topic for a subsequent letter). The practical consequences of this line are manifested quite clearly in the Angela Davis case and in their one-sided hostility to her defense (really a defense of the class). PL has recently taken to attacking Dimitrov (and rightly so) but sparing Stalin who stands behind Dimitrov and all the policies he articulated.

The RU, by way of contrast, covertly adopted the main theses of the 7th World Congress immediately following the Panthers' orgy of "united frontism". The RU's "strategic united front" is a thinly veiled rehash of the Dimitrov popular front, that is, it is based upon unity with a section of the bourgeoisie. The CPUSA adopts the popular front from above and attempts to bring the bourgeoisie directly into the leadership. The RU seeks to build a "united front" (popular front) from below through its "five spearheads". Each of these spearheads of struggle--minorities, anti-imperialism, anti-fascism, women and Trade Unionism--cuts across class lines and leads inexorably, from the opposite direction, to the door of the liberal bourgeoisie. PLP and the RU represent the past of Stalinism while the CP represents its future. PLP and the RU stand squarely in the Stalin tradition--with this exception--where Stalin put forward a more or less developed "theory", these groups are but pale reflections of the past. Stalin's failures have forced his contemporary followers to come down with an acute case of shamefacedness.

THE TRANSITIONAL PROGRAM

The epoch in which we live is the epoch of the contraction and decline of world imperialism. The conditions for revolution are ripe. They are, as Trotsky says, even somewhat rotten. The political and economic crisis of imperialism is being forced onto the backs of the workers. It is therefore possible, through struggle around a "transitional program" for the workers to learn from their own experience the need to take state power. The intervention of a conscious vanguard is the critical subjective condition without which the proper lessons will not be drawn.

Transitional demands are demands which by their very nature cannot be met by a bourgeois society in crisis. These "impossible demands" are only impossible within the framework of capitalism. The transitional program is not governed by the constraints of capitalism but constantly strives to pose the question of power through solutions for the real needs of the workers. The idea of transitional demands had its origins in Marx himself in his Address to the Communist League Central Committee of 1850. In this remarkable document, Marx lays out the basic approach to the democratic petit bourgeoisie, to elections, to embryonic dual power, to transitional demands and to permanent revolution. Marx points out that while the democratic petit bourgeoisie at most seeks the realization of some transitional demands, the proletariat pushes the revolution forward until state power is in the hands of the workers in all the dominant countries. This thesis of Marx, developed fully by Trotsky, must not be misconstrued as a mere phrase incidental to Marx' doctrine.

The transitional program resolves in theory the conflict between the minimum and maximum program controversy which erupted in the 2nd

International. Bernstein's slogan "the movement is everything, the final aim is nothing" expressed the opposite of permanent revolution. Bernstein's conception enabled him, and later Kautsky, to stop short at the minimum program, to elevate it, so to speak, to the beginning and end of Social-Democratic politics. Rosa Luxemburg, in eloquent and heroic rebellion against this revision of Marxism, upheld the maximum program as the program of the new party to be built in Germany. Luxemburg established what was essential--capitalism was in profound crisis and the old revisionist International had to be swept away. She did not, however, solve the problem theoretically of the relation of the period of the accumulation of proletarian forces with the period of civil war and revolution. It was left to Lenin and Trotsky to construct the new International.

The need for an investigation into the policies of the first four Congresses of the 3rd International is urgent! These Congresses were the Congresses of Lenin and Trotsky, the Congresses of the transitional program, of the proletarian united front, of political honesty and uncompromising ideological struggle, and of the supremacy of the world party above its national sections including the Russian section. Lenin's Left-Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder and a host of speeches and articles by Trotsky lay the basis for the new International. Trotsky's writings especially develop the proletarian united front and form a summary of the main lessons of the early years of the Comintern. The ideas embodied in the Transitional Program find their historic continuation in the 1938 program of the 4th International. (We leave aside for the moment the question of revisionism in the 4th International and the proposals for defeating it.) In order to understand the strategic crisis that destroyed the 3rd International under Stalin's leadership we must turn our attention briefly to disputes that broke out within the Soviet Union, disputes which the Chinese are helping to obscure today.

SOCIALISM

Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin believed that communism would replace capitalism only after a transitional period during which the proletariat enforced its dictatorship. Socialism is the first phase of this communist society and will itself be replaced by communism proper, i.e., its higher phase. Socialism, according to the classics, is a classless society which can be identified by the following criteria: (1) Public property, that is, common property of the society as a whole, has replaced state property, collective property, group property, private property, etc.; (2) money has been abolished in the main and replaced with labor certificates and book-keeping is the main form of distribution and exchange; (3) equal products for equal work replaces material incentives which continue under the transitional regime; (4) "He who does not work neither shall he eat" will remain in force during socialism; (5) The state will become a "bourgeois state without the bourgeoisie". This semi-state will no longer be a dictatorship of the proletariat; (6) the armed force will consist of a militia which embraces the entire adult population. The full participation of women will constitute a modern day "index" of society's general emancipation, i.e., whether socialism has been achieved; (7) there will be no bureaucracy in the

sense that everyone will be a "bureaucrat" through rotation, and this process will begin, as does the forming of the militia, immediately following the revolution during the transitional period; (8) Socialism necessitates a higher productivity of labor than capitalism. It is only at a higher productivity than the most advanced capitalism that socialism justifies itself historically and is able to exist; (9) the distinction between town and country and with it between worker and peasant disappears under socialism following a protracted transition period; (10) The regime of socialism will be irreversible, that is, there will be no possibility of a restoration of capitalism; (11) Commodity production will in the main be eliminated which may be deduced from the above; (12) proletarian culture, which is still class culture in a society organized to abolish classes, will bear a transitional stamp, to be replaced by a higher socialist culture; (13) social antagonisms will remain, but there will be no class struggle because there will be no special groupings of the people to be suppressed. In short, it will be the beginning, only the beginning, but definitely the beginning, of the ascent of man from the "kingdom of necessity into the kingdom of freedom".

It does not take a genius to conclude that the society described above will undoubtedly be a world society or at least one that embraces the important imperialist countries of western Europe, the United States and Japan. Seen in this light, and this is the light of Marxism, we can understand why the Bolsheviks never even contemplated that a complete socialist society (Stalin's phrase) could be built in a single country, let alone in backward Russia. Stalin had to turn Lenin inside out in order to arrive at the conclusion that the theory of "socialism in one country" originated in Lenin. The theoretical basis of Stalinism, as an ideological system, begins in this marked departure from Lenin. The need to pose as unoriginal precluded an independent elaboration and proof of the theory of "socialism in one country" except as Talmud-like juggling of quotations. The consequent degeneration of theory (the crisis of method), backed up by the full force of the state and the GPU, forms the unchallengeable foundation of the "official" world communist movement. The history of the Bolsheviks' views on the subject of "socialism in one country" is brilliantly summarized by Trotsky in the 2nd Appendix to Volume III of his History of the Russian Revolution and warrants no further elaboration here.

The controversy over the "definition of socialism" never emerged as a major question among the Bolsheviks for the simple reason that there was universal agreement on the conception and because it had not become a practical question. It is only today, forty-five years later, when the classics of Marxism have been watered down, that it becomes necessary to deal once again with fundamentals. The Chinese, in order to uphold the theory of "socialism in one country" in a kind of backhanded way, have transformed socialism into a vulgar parody of what its founders intended it to be. We have collected the main body of references on the question in the works of Lenin, as well as references in Marx, Engels, Stalin and Mao. We are presently preparing a readable summary of those views in pamphlet form. I could, in the meantime, send you a xeroxed copy of our citations which amount to forty or so major references in Lenin alone.

We had to work against our prejudices when we began to examine Lenin's Collected Works. We, quite literally, had lost the ability to read what was on the printed page. State and Revolution may give the reader trained in the Stalinist school the impression that socialism coincides with the dictatorship of the proletariat and that socialism is the transition society to communism. It is possible to begin throwing off these "mind-forged manacles" by glancing at the subheadings in the critical fifth chapter. These headings reveal the difference between the transition from capitalism to communism, the first phase of communist society and the higher phase of communist society. We did not realize, tho it stared us in the face, that by communism Marx meant the entire mode of production of communism in his famous quote that the dictatorship of the proletariat is needed in the political transition period between capitalist society and communist society. At first, when we read further into Lenin, we imagined him to be hopelessly ambiguous and even a prime cause of the split between Trotsky and Stalin on the theoretical level. Nothing could be further from the truth. Lenin is completely consistent on the points of principle if only we learn to read. The two short articles, Politics and Economics in the Era of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Greetings to the Hungarian Workers are perfectly clear and consistent and should be read in conjunction with this discussion.

A modern day mad hatter would undoubtedly be a bureaucrat in a deformed workers' state. The Chinese view that Mao has discovered that classes and class struggle exist under socialism and that the dictatorship of the proletariat exists under socialism is really an exceptionally crude revision of Lenin. Marx and Lenin knew perfectly well that a protracted transitional period where class struggle persisted and where the proletariat was in power would be needed in order to reach socialism. Stalin established socialism by decree when it was not yet a fact in order to substantiate in practice his absurd theories. The fact that classes and class struggle persisted in the USSR was merely proof that socialism had in fact not been established. There can be no question of new "discoveries" unless we have "discovered" that socialism has ceased to be socialism. If the Chinese wish to change these basic Marxian tenets then let them say so openly and make a case for the changes, but please, not these pathetic distortions.

We are exasperated with the feeble-minded folk who see the methodological dishonesty of the Chinese, who agree with Lenin's conception and then merrily continue to refer to China as socialist because "it is on the socialist road" or because "it has nationalized the means of production and introduced a planned economy" or because "its principal aspect is socialist" or because "it is building socialism", or finally, failing all else, they cry: "Well you are right, but the whole business is a matter of semantics anyway".

The statification of industry and the beginnings of planned economy are really an index of proletarian power and not of socialism. These measures are indications of the determination to build socialism and its necessary prerequisites but not a sign that it has already been built. Lenin made it clear that if there were occasions when the Russia of the early twenties was referred to as

socialist it only reflected the "determination of Soviet power to achieve the transition to socialism, and not that the new economic system is recognized as a socialist order". In a similar vein, the idea of the "socialist road" indicates direction and not achievement. There is a sense in which we speak of the struggle between capitalism and socialism in the transition period--but this useful conception has been much abused. When we assert that the "socialist aspect is principal", what are we really saying? Are we saying that the productivity of labor is higher than under capitalism? Are we saying that equal products for equal work is the main form of distribution? Are we saying that public property (which emerges as the contradiction between state property and other forms of group property is superceded) prevails over "capitalist" property? Or are we saying in a new way that the proletariat is in power? The simplistic dualism capitalism/socialism obscures rather than illumines the complex transitional societies which history will (and has) produced. One of the consequences of the fact that the revolution began in backward countries is that socialism will be far more different from the existing transitional societies than any of these differs from present day capitalism. In fact, certain features of the advanced imperialisms suggest, but only suggest, the future socialist society more faithfully than do the backward countries where the workers are in power. We cannot liquidate the transitional society through bureaucratic decree. The idea that we are in the "early phase of socialism" effaces the distinction between two modes of production, and therefore the line between all class societies and classless society. No wonder each of the workers' states in the various camps tend to view their neighbor as capitalist since departures from a "socialism" which has not arrived are easy enough to notice. In the dualist tradition that which is anti-socialist must be positively capitalist.

Is this a wrangling over words? Lenin warned us to avoid scholastic disputes. The current "definition" of socialism obscures contemporary history from two directions--(1) it liquidates the transitional society throwing perspective off center and introducing endless confusion, and (2) it prevents us from grasping the social and material base for the possible degeneration of a workers' state. We lose the ability to distinguish a social from a political revolution and a parasite upon the backs of the workers from a new class society.

BUREAUCRATIC DEGENERATION

The theory of "socialism in one country" represents the world outlook, not of the proletariat, but of the bureaucracy on the backs of the proletariat. The prime historical cause for the degeneration of the Soviet regime was the severe isolation of the Russian proletariat and the backwardness of Russian society in confrontation with a hostile capitalist encirclement.

The low productivity of labor and the cultural poverty based upon it forced the regime to rely on the former Tsarist officialdom in the course of reconstructing a state apparatus. Lenin pointed out that only a handful of communists watched over a half million old officials and that while these communists thought they were directing the officials, these officials were in fact directing them.

The state, which was to begin withering away immediately following the revolution, has since swollen to massive proportions.

The world proletariat proved too weak to consummate revolution in Europe in the immediate aftermath of WW I which served to isolate the Russian worker from his main ally. The expected revolutions did not come and the weariness of the masses after years of civil war, revolution and famine began to generate forces of conservatism and reaction. These forces found expression in the person of Stalin and in the consoling doctrine that Russia (and later that only Russia) could build a complete, self-sufficient socialist society. Stalinism not only spread illusions and national reformism among the Russian masses, but exported idyllic pictures of conditions in the S.U. for world consumption. These pretty pictures were bound to sharply conflict with reality and produce a crisis. The Chinese have carried this phenomenon to new heights, and, although there are differences, they stem from the same deep causes.

The bureaucracy owes its origins to social forces of a contradictory nature. The bureaucracy, once consolidated, could not escape its origins and therefore retains a dual character. On the one hand it seeks to preserve its own privileges and prerogatives giving it a conservative character; on the other hand it is forced to defend certain of the gains of October on which it rests and from which it derives its justification. The continued rule of the bureaucracy depends upon the political passivity of the masses. The depolitization of the Russian masses was the principal achievement of the Stalin regime. The political passivity of the Russian worker is maintained through an omnipresent police apparatus, through illusions and concessions, and above all, through the bureaucracy's defense of nationalized property and social planning. The threat posed by imperialism is in the last analysis the justification for everything reactionary in the regime.

The overthrow of the bureaucracy can only be understood as a problem of world revolution. Successful revolution in Europe, for example, would remove the last fetter from the explosive discontent of the Russian worker. The defeat of imperialism and the democratic example of the European worker would release pent up social forces. We can see from this, in the threat posed to bureaucratic rule, the source of a profoundly counter-revolutionary current within the bureaucracy. The victory of proletarian revolutions in other countries, particularly in countries with advanced production, begins to assume the proportions of a danger on a par with imperialist military intervention.

A revolution against the bureaucracy would be a political revolution although it would certainly reach into every aspect of life. The revolution would not change the form of property established by October but would extend it. In this sense it would not simply repeat October. The distinction between a political revolution and a social revolution has its origins in Marx and was applied by Trotsky to the Russian experience, and, if you please, brought to "an entirely new level". Marx faced an analytical problem when he observed the revolutions in France that followed the French revolution. These

subsequent upheavals did not establish the bourgeois mode of production since 1789 had already accomplished that. These political revolutions were nevertheless essential to liberate the productive forces for further capitalist development. It was not until 1871 in Paris that a new epoch of social revolutions was inaugurated--the epoch of proletarian revolutions for a new mode of production.

The Chinese thesis that the Russians have restored capitalism (which we only note in passing), is incomprehensible without the theory of a preliminary bureaucratic degeneration. Maoists must come to terms with Trotsky from this angle if only to avoid the notion that capitalism was restored with Stalin's last heartbeat or through a concocted Khrushchevian coup d'etat.

STRATEGY AND INTERNATIONALISM

The materialist foundation for an International is rooted in the gigantic modern productive forces. The interconnected character of world economy and therefore of the world revolution cries out for a coordinated strategy and a world party whose component parts are subordinated to the general approach. The positive elaboration of strategy requires an integrated world view and not one fragmented into its national parts. This methodological starting point is not altered because the proletariat holds power in a part of the world. The inability of any section of the world proletariat to achieve a complete socialist society (the lower phase of communism), particularly in a backward country, without the revolution advancing in the technologically developed countries, establishes with iron necessity that proletarian internationalism is based on material interests.

Marx made it abundantly clear in The German Ideology and other writings that capitalism had created a proletarian who was a world-historical, universal man and had created a world commerce and world culture whose very extension would abolish local communism as well as man in his local being. He further established that the modern productive forces had outgrown their national as well as their private integument. The modern productive forces are by their very nature social and international. The practical conclusion, which forms the starting point for Marxian strategic thought, is that the dominant peoples must more or less simultaneously take hold of the productive forces, subject them to their will, eliminate anarchy of production (for anarchy can only be eliminated on a worldwide scale since planning in the parts merely increases anarchy in the whole), and develop them at unprecedented speed. Socialism assumes the universal development of production and the world trade and society connected with it. There can be no talk of leaping from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom without these conditions.

The seizure of power by the proletariat in backward Russia did not indicate that Marx was a poor guesser or that his method was incorrect. In fact, as we know, he anticipated a revolutionary development in Russia as early as 1870. The real issue before us is strategic and not tactical. To put it plainly: Did Marx' view of revolution among the dominant peoples as a prerequisite for socialism constitute an incidental feature of his general theory? On the con-

trary, it is the guts of his theory! Further, events have not refuted his analysis but have confirmed it. True, events have shown that the workers are capable of coming to power more easily in a backward country than in an advanced one. But events have also shown that, once coming to power, the difficulties facing the proletariat in a backward state are far greater than we expect for an advanced state. Due to the law of uneven and combined development the process began in the backward states--but it can only be completed in the advanced states--such is the nature of the interdependence of the proletarian struggle. The Russians rescued the revolution from European opportunism; the Europeans will have to rescue it from Asiatic obscurantism.

The need for a revolution among the dominant peoples as a prerequisite for socialism remains no less true today. The rise, for example, of a bureaucracy in the face of relatively equal norms implemented by October rests finally upon scarcity; thus, "want becomes generalized" (which is only socialism in appearance) and, as Marx says, "all the old filthy business is reproduced". The absolute backwardness of Russia, and now China (whose margin of surplus is exceedingly thin), tho not decisive in itself becomes so in the face of continued relative backwardness vis a vis imperialism. These conditions are the prisonhouse from which there is no escape--except through revolution in the west. It is from these conditions that all the distortions in the proletarian state have their seedbed. This "theory of the productive forces", if you please, fully conforms to Marx' analysis and is an application of the central guiding idea in his strategic thinking. (It should not be necessary, but perhaps it is best said that--the subjective factor is able to alter the tempo but not the direction of events when we speak in world historic terms. In the case of Russia, such an "alternation" in the post-1924 period might have meant successful revolution in the west early enough to arrest counterrevolutionary tendencies in the USSR; a genuinely proletarian leadership would almost probably have succeeded in extending the revolution eastward in the twenties--either event, or both, would have profoundly altered the prospects for the Russian regime and therefore world history. We are in no way fatalists.)

The struggle between Trotskyism and Stalinism is the same for our time as Leninism vs. revisionism was (and is). Taking the question from the standpoint of its class roots, we can understand why only Trotskyism makes the debate contemporary. Lenin developed his theory of revisionism and its class roots, at a time when the universal proletariat was universally out-of-power. The upper stratum of the proletariat, the labor aristocracy, Trade bureaucrats, officials, some petit bourgeois, political representatives, party hacks, etc., came to strike a bargain with the bourgeoisie at the expense of the majority of the class. Though part of the proletariat, flesh of its flesh so to speak, this stratum in bargaining for itself, collaborated with the bourgeoisie and betrayed the revolution wherever its influence was strong. Sound familiar? Of course. All this is old hat.

It stands to reason that an elaboration, a development of that theory would become necessary once a national section (and only a

revolutionary fraction of that national section at that) came to power in a part of the globe. The bureaucrat is the "class" equivalent in a country where the proletariat-is-in-power of those we mentioned in a country where the proletariat-is-out-of-power. Here too we see international collaboration with the bourgeoisie for the benefit of the privileged stratum at the expense of the majority of the class internally and on a world scale. The contradiction between the part and the whole, between the short run and the long run, etc. reemerges in a new setting. Taken from this angle, we can see why national reformism, that is "socialism in one country", was bound to become the central focus of the clash between Marxism and revisionism in the epoch of workers' states. Indeed, the controversy between the permanent revolution and socialism in one country is not some dead better-to-be-forgotten controversy dredged up by "decadent bourgeois historians and embittered renegades".

This brings us back to the question at hand. The liquidation of strategy flows from this deviation whose material and historical roots we have partially identified. The various revisionist bureaucracies are bound to have mutually conflicting "strategies"--to put it more accurately--they are bound to have conflicting tactical proposals empirically derived for their own interests. The monism of contemporary world development, of which Plekhanov spoke when he was still a Marxist, forces the contending pragmatisms to universalize themselves, to speak out as if they expressed a general interest. This is nothing but the expression within the working class movement of the universal categories of bourgeois thought enshrined in the French revolution of 1789.

The systematization of the Bukharin-Stalin pragmatism takes place at the 6th World Congress in the program of the Comintern. Trotsky, tho expelled from the Russian party, was still a member of the Comintern and therefore had the right of appeal. Trotsky's Critique of the Draft Program of the Comintern is the essential document for grasping the whole consolidation of Stalinism, its liquidation of strategy and the posing of an alternative. Trotsky's critique was suppressed in committee and smuggled out by Cannon, a delegate to the Congress, and later serialized in the opening issues of The Militant.

Stalin's methodological break with dialectics which lays the foundations for class collaboration consists of his separation of internal and external factors into hermetically sealed compartments. The doctrine that it was possible to build a complete socialist society in Russia transformed intervention into the sole threat and possible spoiler of plans to turn socialism into a "force of example". Stalin's 18th Congress Report, just ten years later, went so far as to postulate an isolated communist society (higher phase). Why not? Once you have built socialism what is there left to build? The fundamental and not incidental unity of Stalin and Khrushchev lies precisely in this conception which in turn derives from socialism in one country. The corollary of this view is that in order to prevent intervention the world bourgeoisie, or at least a section of it, must be neutralized (hence Dimitrov's definition of fascism which appeals to a section of the German bourgeoisie and the world bourgeoisie); and finally, the parties of the world must become the Soviet Union's "border guards". We can thus see in relief the inter-

connection of Stalin's domestic and foreign policies, their underlying unity, and the inner mechanism which led to the de facto collapse of the 3rd International prior to its de jure abolition.

WHY NO INTERNATIONAL?

How to evaluate Mao Tse Tung Thought? The nub of the question turns invariably upon the issue of proletarian internationalism. It is here that the gendarmes of backwardness are quartermastered. We must uncover the crisis of leadership from under the wraps of cult worship even greater than that of Stalin. These are stinging words, but please, review with me the facts.

Stalin liquidated the 3rd International after it "had done its job" (!), in order to prove his "genuine anti-fascism" to the British and American bourgeoisie. Scandalous! The gravity of his crime is only mitigated by the fact, and the punyness of the event is only explained by the fact, that he liquidated the reality of the International way back in 1928! Trotsky predicted in 1928, that the International, which once met yearly (1919-1922), under extremely repressive conditions, would soon meet every four years, then every ten, then not at all. The proof that the International had ceased to exist in reality is verified by the universal silence, not so much as a peep was offered, from the member parties. Today, most of these parties line up with the Soviet revisionists and are bankrupt in every respect.

The Chinese have done nothing these 28 years (1943-1971) to create a new International. The decisive split in the parties of the Old International took place in 1963 in the Sino-Soviet dispute. Nearly 8 years have passed since the "break with revisionism" and still there are no preparatory plans for an International. The reason can be simply stated. A new International cannot be founded without summing up the Old. The Old was bankrupt. In order to sum up the past it is necessary to come to grips with Stalinism and the Chinese leadership is unprepared for this task. It is no wonder that not a single pamphlet exists summarizing the last four decades of the revolution in the west and that Lin Piao is reduced to the enigmatic "temporary postponement of the revolution in the west". What poisonous weeds have been left to blossom as the sun rises in the east?

The Maoists, like yourself, who still believe in an International, believe that the Chinese are waiting for the right time. These "delays" in preparing for an International cannot be passed off as a matter of tactics or timing. Lenin struggled for a new International even when he was isolated within his own party in the extreme (and fought publicly, but those days for some are over), and when the international forces for revolution were extremely weak. His international proposals were the last to be accepted by the re-armed Bolsheviks after April. Lenin considered a revolutionary International indispensable precisely to help the newborn parties establish their bearings. He was no harvester, passively waiting to gather up the ripe fruit, but a sower of seeds, a planter and a cultivator. The difference between Stalin and Mao on the question of

an International resolves itself to this: Where Stalin inherited a real International and was forced to liquidate it, Mao accepts the Stalin legacy and, having liquidated strategic thinking, find an International unnecessary.

MAO TSE TUNG AND STRATEGY

Let us suppose that Mao Tse Tung and the CPC were to convene an International Congress. What would be our attitude? We would hail the Congress in principle but we would have to oppose the strategic line that emanated from that Congress. Why? The current absence of an International (new) is merely an index of Mao's departure from Marxism. Stalin did, after all, head an International and he did establish "strategic" guidelines. It is obviously not enough for an International to exist, it must have a correct political line. The rudiments of strategy which the Chinese have already put forward would lead to new disasters for the proletariat.

The Chinese positions may be found in the Polemics with the Soviets, in the series of statements by Mao Tse Tung (such as those on the black struggle in the U.S., on Indochina, on Japan, etc.). These statements particularize the general strategic line within a country or area. Finally there are the important speeches by Lin Piao and various editorials, news items, etc. The analytic content of these proposals vis a vis the west is nil. The only substantive proposals are for the colonial and semi-colonial countries of the world which are nevertheless dominated by the capitalist mode of production. The theory of new democracy is the main pillar on which these proposals rest.

The theory of new democracy did not reflect the course of the Chinese revolution. Or, to put it more precisely, the algebraic character of new democracy makes it responsible indirectly and in a distorted form for both the successful Chinese revolution and the Indonesian disaster. This astonishing statement, which is the fruit of a fairly thorough research, seems to fly in the face of facts and common sense. When Mao's On New Democracy was written and distributed, it contained no references to the "leading role of the proletariat". This phrase was written into the pamphlet (and many other pamphlets dealing with the subject) in 1951 after coming to power. In fact, as late as 1938 (and we have the documents) Mao proposed that the "great" Chiang Kai Shek and the "glorious" Kuomintang should "lead the anti-Japanese united front" and without their leadership all would come to nought. These positions were subsequently written out of the Selected Works. Marx and Engels, by way of contrast, added a preface to new editions of their works when they considered an important change appropriate. They never treated essential changes lightly slipping from one "authorized" edition to another. They respected the intelligence of the proletariat and had no cult to protect. The Chinese approach is a direct methodological continuation of Stalinism. (There are innumerable other tamperings in the Selected Works going back to the twenties--but we will not bother about them here.)

The 1949 regime began to be referred to as a "dictatorship of the proletariat" in 1970 following the Cultural Revolution. The

stand was taken at that time and since repeated early this year that Mao always called it that. The recent interpretation, which is more in accord with the actual course of the Chinese revolution (albeit a deformed dictatorship from its inception), directly contradicts the theory of joint dictatorship and the theory of the four-class dictatorship. Lenin's whole theory which crystallized in April of 1917 and which is elucidated in State and Revolution and all his subsequent writings proves that a class dictatorship is necessarily a dictatorship of a single class. There is no such thing as a "joint" dictatorship except as a passing or ephemeral thing. The theory of the new democratic state is a fundamental revision of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky's conception of the state. The Leninist conception distinguishes between the nature of the state and the alliances the ruling class enters into. Mao not only blurred the distinction between these two conceptions but actually opposed new democracy to the dictatorship of the proletariat as a form of rule.

Mao Tse Tung's (really Stalin's) two-stage theory of revolution in a backward country is likewise bankrupt. The lesson of October is precisely that the proletariat must begin to carry out socialist tasks at the very moment it is completing the democratic tasks. The line between the minimum and maximum program is necessarily effaced. There can be no talk of "continuous" or "consecutive" stages---It is true that a point is reached when the democratic tasks are completed and all that remains are additional socialist tasks. This is too obvious to bear repeating. But it is not true that one "set of tasks" follows another "set of tasks" with a slight "fuzziness" at the edges (i.e. no Chinese Wall). Nor is it true that these tasks are carried out by different dictatorships. The proletarian dictatorship is faced with two sets of tasks: democratic and socialist. These were begun simultaneously in 1949 and were contained in the Constitution of the Peoples Consultative Congress. The Congress asserted that all monopoly capital (big capital, compradore capital, etc.) would undergo nationalization and that these industries would constitute thereafter the socialist sector which would be the leading sector of the entire economy.

The only conclusion we can reach is that Mao made an empirical break with Stalin and with his own conception of the Chinese revolution. The incorrigible Chiang Kai Shek made it clear that either the proletariat would come to power or the workers and peasants would face a bloodbath so sweeping that the 1927 massacre of the workers movement by Chiang would appear in contrast as no more than a prick of the finger. Mao and the Chinese had absorbed the blood lesson of 1927 even if Stalin was prepared for a re-edition of his earlier betrayal.

The events of 1965 confirm our analysis. Mao Tse Tung, on behalf of the CCCPC, issued a eulogistic statement to the Communist Party of Indonesia. The CPI had "sided" with the Chinese against the Russians in the Sino-Soviet dispute. The statement lavishly praised the leadership of the CPI, upheld the bloc of four classes in Indonesia and spoke of "consolidating" and "extending" it. The question of who held state power was completely obscured.

We are still, in 1971, awaiting a self-criticism from the Chinese on their role in these events. None has been forthcoming. The CPI published a self-criticism which appeared in the Peking Review and the Albanians published a critique of the CPI. These criticisms and self-criticism reduced the question to material preparations for violent civil war to back up the propagandistic acknowledgment of a violent transition in the CPI's pre-coup press. In retrospect the bourgeois character of the state under Sukarno was exposed and the theory of new democracy was trotted forth once again with special stress on the "leadership of the proletariat".

The algebraic character of the new democratic state, once scrutinized, resolves itself into two mutually exclusive dictatorships. When Mao speaks of a third type of state with joint dictatorships, he lassoes everyone the China of 1949 to the UAR of today. The litmus test of the class nature of these regimes is determined by which class has the "leading role", which in turn resolves itself, in Leninist categories, to a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie or a dictatorship of the proletariat. The "third" form of state "divides into two" and we are left once again with two types of dictatorships in all societies dominated by the capitalist mode of production through the world market and the predominance of the town over the countryside.

The Chinese obfuscation of this elementary proposition is what leads to the tragic and treacherous "illusions" of parties like the Indonesian. It leads to popular fronts, (actually it is derived from popular fronts) such as that in Cambodia, etc., which in turn opens the door to leadership by the bourgeoisie (Sihanouk, etc.). In the last analysis it is a variation of the Russian conception of the non-capitalist (but not socialist) path of development.

The so-called "leading role of the proletariat" is not sufficient insurance against the degeneration of the revolution to say nothing of the post-revolutionary regime. This is particularly so when confusion persists over the relation between tasks, alliances, and when continued overtures are made to the "patriotic progressive forces", that is, to the "national bourgeoisie". We have seen the leadership of the proletariat degenerate completely in Spain where it meant in practice the organizational leadership of the Communist Party of Spain on a bourgeois program and in contradistinction to the dictatorship of the proletariat. The current courtship of Sihanouk by Mao has all the earmarks of previous errors. Sihanouk leads the "united front" and the public approach to him at least is the one of all unity and no struggle. Even if we assume (and it may be true) that the proletariat holds the reins of leadership in the field of military operations "where it counts", we are faced with a Spanish situation at worst and cynical bureaucratic manipulation at best. The option is wide open for a betrayal of the revolution by simply continuing the present policy to its logical conclusion.

The general strategic proposal of the Chinese can be expressed in the slogan "Build a united front against imperialism". The strategy calls for the building of a "worldwide united front against

U.S. imperialism". Imperialist Japan, for example, should build, according to Mao, a broad "patriotic united front of all strata" including "many big Japanese entrepreneurs" to oppose U.S. imperialism. The recent telegram from Mao Tse Tung to Madame DeGaulle and Chou En lai's attendance at the funeral (laying a wreath at the grave) is in the finest tradition of class collaboration. DeGaulle, it seems, says an echo from the past, is a "genuine anti-fascist". These Chinese actions are designed to prevent the French proletariat from forming a vanguard party based on the strategic perspective of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the form of a Soviet United States of Europe.

DeGaulle is an arch-criminal who suppressed the 1968 May-June risings of the students and the workers. DeGaulle greeted the re-awakened French proletariat with the threat of NATO (German) military intervention and released the fascist colon Generals who a few years earlier had tried to take his life. The Maoist left who rebelled alongside their Trotskyist comrades and who have been driven underground can only be disoriented and demoralized by such gross opportunism. The "telegram affair" is completely consistent with Chinese strategy in Japan and other imperialist countries. We can neither escape from this fact nor explain it away.

The crisis in all U.S. Maoist tendencies is rooted in the application of this strategy to the U.S. The only document that deals directly with the United States, aside from statements on the Negro Question, is the Open Letter to the CPUSA. The Chinese call for "an anti-monopoly united front against imperialist policies [!] of aggression and war". This strategy, if consistently applied to the U.S. is bound to bring forth the popular front. The strategy is a variant of the "two-stage" theory of revolution. Label Bergman of the Revolutionary Union actually is "enriching the revolutionary [sic] tradition of William Z. Foster" as the Chinese advise.

The Peking Review is the organ of the worldwide united front against imperialism. It cannot be read from any other angle. Now the complications begin when we consider that it is the organ of the CPC and of the Chinese state. As an organ of the "revolutionary proletariat" its avowed purpose is to spread Marxism, but as an organ of the front it treats us, as you once put it commenting on the Peoples World, to an "all class view of the news". In reality a bourgeois view. Are we perhaps exaggerating? It is a forum for Sihanouk, it supports the Allende government uncritically, it cheers the eyewash nationalization reforms of the Ceylonese government and raises no warnings, it supports the Pakistani government, the Rumanian government (as socialist no less), etc., etc. We know of course that it is not really the organ of the worldwide united front. The united front is Chinese policy. The editorial staff finds itself hopelessly confronted with mutually contradictory obligations. It is a case in point of how national reformism takes precedence over proletarian internationalism. In case the critics crow too loudly, it is a simple enough matter to pass the buck--Chou En Lai's telegram to Nasser is an "affair of state", reports on Chile are "items of news", Indonesia's affairs are a matter for Indonesians to settle, etc., etc. We can be sure, however, of one thing: whenever one policy seriously gets in the way of another policy,

proletarian internationalism will be the first to suffer.

Mao's revisionist strategy is veiled (and thereby maintained) through its extreme indefiniteness. The strategic formulations, even those concerning the "united front", are subject within limits to various interpretations. This accounts for the total inconsistency of Maoist amalgams. The Weathermen, the Venceremos RU splitoff, the Panthers, etc. (insofar as they are consistent) stress the armed worldwide united front against imperialism. They are detachments of a revolutionary army already in action. Weatherman has carried this to its theoretical extreme. These currents reflect profound pessimism with regard to the industrial proletariat and the prospects for an American revolution. The right opportunist line is expressed, as we have seen, in the "stages theory" of the Avakian-Bergman RU group and reflects the same pessimism in the proletariat by appealing exclusively to the lowest common denominator. Maoism is the source of both these deviations.

The small Maoist collectives of which we have been a part have no future whatsoever. The working premise of these groups, at least those with which we are in contact, rejects the "stages theory", rejects the "broad anti-monopoly united front against imperialist policies", rejects the popular front, rejects Dimitrov, rejects the worship of practice, rejects armed struggle now, etc., etc. The continued existence of these groups, yours included, depends upon their self-restriction to localized propagandistic activities which evade the central problem of strategy and its inevitable consequences in practice. The minuteness of the group enables it to "get high" on Mao Tse Tung Thought without ever coming to grips with its contradictions.

There is no philosophers stone which can reconcile the contradiction posed by the confusion over the "principal contradiction". The sophistic juggling of "fundamental" and "principal" only compounds the confusion. The divorce of the domestic U.S. revolution from the world relation of forces is methodologically untenable as is the vulgar theory of their "interpenetration" a la the Red Papers. There is no revolutionary formula, and this is why it engenders endless and fruitless discussion, that can make the contradiction (bourgeoisie vs. proletariat) compatible with the contradiction (monopolists vs. people). I defy you to formulate it.

The indefiniteness of the Chinese presents other methodological difficulties. One trend tries to "decode" Mao's Statements and pore over every word as if concentration would produce the analysis which isn't there. The same devotee who clings to each pronouncement of Mao may be heard whining the philistine cry: "Mao shouldn't be expected to solve all our problems for us", or as the occasion permits, "We can't blame the Chinese for our own shortcomings". These artful dodges which make up the arsenal of the same incompetent minds only serve to guard backwardness and postpone a reckoning. It is of course childish to expect Mao to divine all detailed and particular problems just as it is transparently false to cover Chinese strategic impoverishment with the criticism that it is arrogant to expect correct general guidelines from someone so far away. I know you are not guilty of this method but I raise it because a number of your

"coworkers" in the Bay Area and in L.A. insist on bringing the level of the discussion down to this low point.

THE "OLD COLLECTIVE"

The struggle for revolutionary strategy invariably produces and engenders a struggle for the dialectical method. We always considered it a truism and the "Old Collective" was founded on this premise--that the proletariat could not move forward without summing its past practice, that the present and therefore the future had its roots in the past. It is pathetic how we squabbled endlessly over the simplistic theory/practice dualism--now theory was principal, now practice was principal. These arid disputes reflect a profoundly reactionary current. It was never the issue. It is not now the issue!

It is ironic that both tendencies were committing the same fundamental error. I buried myself ostrich-like in blind opportunist practice, while others, writing mountains of words, took not a single step forward. Who was right? It is a pointless quest. The "Old Collective", before the split and its subsequent dissolution, was bogged down in the Dogmatic Tradition. The attempts that we made to sum up the Third International or the Russian experience never even reviewed the most comprehensive critique of that experience extant--the writings of Leon Trotsky. A Great Wall had been erected through a generation of Stalinists through terror, slander and falsification to turn Trotskyism into a no man's land where travelers proceeded only at grave peril. We were very close to Trotskyism without knowing it. (PLP has recently found itself in a similar dilemma. They have grown so desperate that they have taken to attacking Lenin and Mao in order to preserve Stalin. Steve and Myrna Cherkoss, as well as many others have recently split from PLP to join the Workers League. The earlier Farinas split (editor formerly of Desafio) began the process in earnest.)

Our group never considered Trotsky's thesis of the nature of fascism even tho we vaguely criticized Dimitrov's division into two sections--a fascist section and a "bourgeois democratic" section. We never examined the dialectical opposition between Trotsky's conception of the fascist state and the degenerated workers' state in the Soviet Union. We never considered Trotsky's views on the armed proletarian united front even tho we had come up with a theory somewhat similar. We never fell into the trap (you didn't I did) of accepting the Popular Front with violence (Foster) as a replacement for the Popular Front without violence (Khrushchev). We never dealt with the strategic implications of Trotsky's thesis that either mankind would relapse into barbarism (fascism or worse) or move forward to socialism. In short, we never seriously considered replacing the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie with the dictatorship of the proletariat, even tho we had rejected replacing one form of bourgeois rule with another. We certainly never examined the conception of transitional demands forged at the first four Congresses of the Communist International.

If we had only been armchairs! We might have investigated the issues. We were not even that. We were dogmatists with grandiose visions. We used the club of "class stand" defined apriorily, to prevent an investigation of fundamentals (permanent revolution vs. socialism in one country). We did this, to be sure, unconsciously. Our formula was: Sum up the past plus take a "class stand" equals rehashed Stalinism.

Three years of floundering has left a bad taste in a number of mouths. There are no mouthwashes to be taken. To some we have now committed the cardinal. On the mental screen of Stalinism our turn toward Trotskyism will simply confirm the worst imaginings and predictions of the opportunists. The ideological struggle, complete with "splitting and wrecking", has ended up in the swamp of Trotskyism only one step removed from the bourgeoisie, disillusionment, or even police agency, --- so the story goes ad nauseum. Stalin did his work well. He mined and boobytrapped the path toward Marxism and then annihilated those who stumbled reaching it. The whole sick refraction of reality immortalized in the falsified histories of Stalinism (notably the History of the CPSU (B)) is producing its own mirror image. The growth of Trotskyism is the essential healthy by-product of the manifold decay of Stalinism. Taken from this angle, Stalinism is an ideological leper colony. I dare say even the bandages reek.

Our collective fought a key fight with the Dogmatic Tradition which proved to be the main methodological obstacle to even an investigation. We did so without knowing where it would lead us but knowing that it represented the antithesis of scientific socialism. Gone forever is the time when we will consider any thinker infallible and substitute his thinking, however rich, however truly an expression of the relation of class forces, for an independent inquiry and for seriously pondered, independently worked out conclusions.

We are quite anxious to talk to you either individually or as a group. We could arrange separate lodging if we came up there so as not to burden the household which no doubt has its hands full with the joyful labor of caring for the newborn and future proletarian heroine. Or if you can manage a trip south you could stay here for as long as you like.

We are making this letter generally available and we hope you do the same. I look forward to your early reply.

With communist greetings,

Marv