

# Chicago Workers' Voice

## Theoretical Journal, Issue #2



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This issue of the CWV Theoretical Journal features:

- Reactions to our first issue:

*Bitter polemic from Boston against Journal; Chicago hits back defending open debate; replies from Joseph (Detroit), Neil (LA), Pete (Detroit)*

- Reviews of books by Nigel Harris and Noam Chomsky

- Portuguese Marxist-Leninists on "Ultra-Imperialism"

- Letters debating issues connected with the dissolution of the MLP:

*Agnosticism vs. Scientific method; Imperialism, revisionism vs Communism; the changing composition of the working class and more*

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## **We Welcome an Open Debate While Others Mock and Grimace**

We have received the statement from the Boston Communist Study Group dated Feb. 5 1994. We are printing it in this issue of the *CWV Theoretical Journal*. This statement begins with a long attack on the Chicago Workers' Voice Theoretical Journal (referred to as the *CWV Theoretical Supplement*).

It opens with the sectarian claim that the *Theoretical Journal* is a "competing" journal. If the *CWV* had the same premise as the journal the Boston group is proposing, then we could see something to the charge "competing." But come on comrades, our Journal and your proposed journal (to come out in June?) have different premises and you know it! So please be honest about it.

Why are our former comrades in Boston so hot and bothered about the *CWV*? The statement of the Boston group explains that they don't agree that the "key factor in the dissolution of the MLP was ideological divergences". Therefore, they don't want anyone to talk about these divergent views, let alone criticize them!

But isn't this, too, a little dishonest? Point Number 1 in their list of objections to *CWV* states:

"1. It negates the objective factors, erosion of mass influence, evaporation of the pro-party trend, the fact that a number of profound theoretical questions had been raised by history and could no longer be ignored and that no one in the party had well founded answers to them yet, thus leading to **not only different views but an erosion of confidence in where we were going.**"

Their statement later lists a series of topics which they think are worthy of theoretical investigation. Then it goes on to give some of their current views on imperialism, revolution in

the dependent countries, socialism, the role of the working class, the role of the middle strata, all issues that were and are controversial among ex-MLP members (not to mention the rest of the left). So the Boston group knows what the issues are. We know of no one who disagrees with the need for theoretical work on the issues these comrades raise. However, there are serious differences on what perspective this work should have. There are also disagreements on what conclusions can be drawn from the theoretical work already done. The BCSG's statement indicates that they understand this as well as we do.

But the BCSG doesn't want anyone to say this openly and they don't want any debate (certainly not in print) on these divergences. They do concede: "At this point we feel the proper place for the discussion that is going on [which they identify as a debate over the history of the MLP — we think the debate is much broader — ed.] is the E-mail. If someone wants to publish that, that is their prerogative.

What we are opposed to is printing the current very partial and subjective stuff as any kind of theoretical paper in the journal we are proposing. We do not want to turn our journal into the center for such a debate but want it to serve a different purpose."

Now, comrades haven't you just said that you will not publish the debate that is currently raging over the issues of imperialism, Marxism-Leninism, the role of the working class, assessment of party history and other issues in your journal? And didn't you say if someone else wants to do it, that's their prerogative? So why the accusation "competing" journal? Isn't it a tad bit hypocritical to admit that there are divergences of views but not be willing to state openly what they are and put that in print? The MLP had a stand of discussing controversial issues in public: on problems in the anti-revisionist movement, our assessments of Soviet history, our views on the problems facing Marxist-Leninist parties, our views on the

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Mailing address:

E-mail address:

CWV  
P. O. Box 11542  
Chicago IL 60611

[mlbooks@mercury.mcs.com](mailto:mlbooks@mercury.mcs.com)



assessment of left political forces such as the ANC, PLO, FSLN, FMLN, etc. But when it comes to issues that existed within the MLP some people don't want to face the music.

The Boston Communist Study Group (BCSG) admits that not only are there different views inside the MLP trend but an erosion of confidence.

The letter of 11-1-93 from Boston states "...we found more questions than answers. Questions about various conclusions of Lenin, and in the case of the study of changes in the working class and class structure in advances capitalist society, even questions about fundamental premises of Marxism. And yet there was no quick route to answers. And so we entered a period of great ideological uncertainty in which answers will be quite far off."

Their letters reveal that they have great uncertainty about Leninism. It's possible that in their minds they may separate Leninism from Marxism. But they also have uncertainty about Marxism, the role of the working class, the possibilities of socialism. They admit that not all comrades have the same uncertainty — but they want this discussion, too, declared off limits!

Well, other comrades want to have this discussion — over the value of Marxism-Leninism, over the controversial questions of imperialism, the role of the working class, the revolution in the dependent countries, etc. And these comrades want an open discussion and debate. So can you fault us for thinking that they might not find an outlet in the journal proposed by Boston? We thought that there would be a need for another journal, so we are publishing it, whether the Brahmins in Boston approve or not.

However, we want to make it clear that the material which the Boston group is thinking of printing is valuable material. It was work started by the MLP and we have seen the drafts of most of it. We think finishing it and publishing it will contribute to moving forward the current debate.

## Straw Men

The BCSG has charged us with intellectual dishonesty. They claim that the CWV "systematically misrepresents the views of others, setting up straw men to knock down."

We presume that the Boston comrades are objecting to the Dec. 13, 1993 statement of the Chicago Branch on the dissolution of the MLP where we state:

"What finally became obvious, in our opinion, was that a number of party members (particularly some Central Committee members) had developed one or more of the following views:

— that Lenin's theory of imperialism no longer applies to the current world and was, perhaps, flawed in its time.

— that a perspective for socialist revolution is not valid for the developing countries until socialism is achieved in all the advanced countries

— that Leninism, and perhaps Marxism, are a burden not a tool, and that we need to start from scratch to develop class analysis and revolutionary theory, and more."

We printed Jim's letter (from IB #77 of Oct. 3, 1992) and Manny's report to the 4th Congress (reprinted from IB #80 Feb. 10, 1993) in the first issue of the CWV Theoretical Journal, Jan. 25, 1994. These letters confirm our view that these comrades are developing views which question not only Lenin's theory of imperialism but the very existence of imperialism. We will carry more debate material on this question in the CWV. Additionally, Joseph's letter of Feb. 10, 1994 which replies to Boston has pointed out fairly well that the accused are indeed guilty of questioning not only Lenin's theory of imperialism but the very existence of imperialism. Furthermore the Boston statement misquotes various comrades in a way that makes their views look somewhat different than they are.

As for the other issues this and future issues of the CWV will carry material showing that these issues

really exist.

Meanwhile, the comrades in Boston have created a few "straw men" of their own. They state "the majority of the former Chicago Branch have a bone to pick. Attributing the demise of the MLP to ideological sources has a specific appeal for the majority of a local organization that harbors grudges against the line of the MLP, particularly against the rejection of Chicago's views at the 4th Congress."

Here the comrades in Boston are referring to a debate which took place in 1991-92 over the Party's agitation on the U.S. War in the Persian Gulf and other issues.

For better or worse, the debate over the agitation on the Persian Gulf war dealt in detail with various formulations. It dealt with whether certain questions were or were not dealt with in the agitation and how well. It dealt with whether or not there was any general weakness in the Marxist-Leninist Party's agitation. The letters which appeared in the IB on this debate never characterized this as a fight or a debate over the line of the MLP. Nor did the resolution on the Persian Gulf War agitation that was supported by several comrades in Chicago at the 4th Congress express disagreements with the line of the MLP.

At the time this debate was going on it was not characterized by anybody who participated in the debate on either side that various Chicago comrades had a "grudge against the line of the MLP." If the comrades in Boston want to make that assessment now they can. But they should back it up with facts and they should not try to portray it as if their assessment was a given.

We would like to know why they now think that the former Chicago Branch had a "grudge against the line of the MLP."

## What's behind the accusations of the BCSG?

We are wondering if comrades in Boston now hold that the views of

*Continued on Page 32*

# Statement of Boston Communist Study Group, formerly Boston Branch of MLP. (Boston #5, ed.)

We would like to put forward some further views on the theoretical work. But first we would like to comment on the competing proposal of the former Chicago Branch of the MLP for a theoretical journal.

The Chicago proposal is based on the assessment that the key factor in the dissolution of the MLP was ideological divergences specifically that in the face of great difficulties and enormous theoretical questions "a number of party members (particularly some Central Committee members)" began to develop views that were either liquidationist and social democratic or "bordered" on that. Hence Chicago proposes to publish with some others a journal whose main purpose appears to be to develop a debate with the holders of views they disagree with and to polemicize against them. Practically speaking this seems to mean publishing the IB debate that occurred before the 4th Congress and the IB and E-mail debate that occurred before the 5th Congress and continues somewhat to date. There is also a proposal to publish deeper theoretical articles tacked on to the end of the Chicago statement, but that is very secondary to the primary objective of bringing the holders of certain views into the light of the public scrutiny and branding them.

The Chicago proposal would make a certain sense if indeed liquidationist and social democratic views had caused the demise of the MLP, and if indeed the struggle against these al-

leged views had been suppressed and if indeed the conditions for a nationwide activist party had continued to exist. Then the first step in building something new would be to exorcise bourgeois influences that had caused the crash. But that was not the case. We object to the Chicago proposal on 3 grounds:

1. It negates the objective factors, erosion of mass influence, evaporation of the pro-party trend, the fact that a number of profound theoretical questions had been raised by history and could no longer be ignored and that no one in the party had well founded answers to them yet, thus leading to not only different views but an erosion of confidence in where we were going.

2. To back up their charges that the key factor was the emergence of social democratic and liquidationist views (or, as Julie says, views bordering on that) were the key factor in the demise of MLP, the Chicago statement systematically misrepresents the views of others, setting up strawmen to knock down.

3. While paying a few words of lip service to the question of theoretical work to solve the vexed questions, Chicago in fact is avoiding getting down to work on this. The statement and the statements of those supporting the Chicago initiative such as Tim, Jake, Mark and Gary show that they are stuck in a mode of settling serious questions by sloganeering against straw men rather than investigating the questions. We believe that this

method can only work against an atmosphere of collaboration in theoretical work and stifle any theoretical thought among those who participate in it.

The method of sloganeering against straw men lends itself to disregarding real problems and winning the imagined holy war with a quick route of the alleged infidels: yes to Marxism-Leninism, no to imperialism, yes to socialism. But while there are a few true believers who want nothing more than this, the majority of the former Chicago Branch have a bone to pick. Attributing the demise of the MLP to ideological sources has a specific appeal for the majority of a local organization that harbors grudges against the line of the MLP, particularly against the rejection of Chicago views at the 4th Congress. "Thinking" that we were "right all along" has a different meaning in Chicago than elsewhere including among most of their current allies. The basis for overcoming this potentially prickly contradiction lies in an orientation of erecting and knocking down straw men. So long as things remain at the level of sloganeering and sophistry against imaginary targets, differing but allied schools of thought can reach accommodation without having to face up to the hard facts of their similarities and differences. Such an approach makes sense only if one conceives of theoretical debate as a matter of exorcising impure thoughts rather than grappling with the very real problems of the movement and social development.

The theoretical journal we are proposing has a different basis. Today there are a number of important theoretical questions to which none of us has well founded answers. Whether or how those questions are answered may have an important effect on a revolutionary movement arising in the future, even if only in making its path somewhat less tortuous. Toward this end we are working on a theoretical journal based on investigation. We

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are not against debates or polemics with others or among ourselves. However, we think that the debate over various views can only go forward and contribute something if it is tied to investigation. We believe that a theoretical journal based on investigation is the best way to provide the discipline to get some theoretical work done and not simply argue at our present level of knowledge or ignorance.

At this point we are continuing theoretical work locally on two questions, analysis of the role of professional/managerial strata and analysis of the service sector. Presently we are working on a report on the history of theoretical views on the professional/managerial strata and a report on the history of the struggles of various strata of hospital workers since the 1950's. People in other areas are working on reports on the theory of the labor aristocracy and its connection to imperialism, Lenin's views on state capitalism, and the impact of NAFTA on farm workers on both sides of the border.

We invite everyone to take up work on theoretical questions of interest at whatever level is possible. Those who would like to submit drafts, or consult on work they are doing can contact us at:

Boston Worker  
PO Box 8934  
Boston, MA 02114

We are aiming to have enough material to publish in May or June. When we get closer to that point we will ask for financial contributions to make publishing possible. And over time as the project gains momentum, we will look at developing further organization.

#### **A note on straw men.**

Before going on to some thoughts on the theoretical work, we would like to register our objections to the systematic mischaracterization of the views of "a number of party members (particularly some members of the Central Committee)" by the Chicago statement. These views are simplified and distorted beyond recognition so as to set up straw men to debate against.

a: "that Lenin's theory of imperialism no longer ap-

plies to the current world and was perhaps flawed in its time."

What member or CC member gave such a view? It would be more helpful to say what the actual views were. Those views we believe were: 1. Jim raised that he does not believe that imperialism operates by a territorial division of the world based on colonies or neo colonies today. That things have changed since the anti colonial national revolutions have been completed and political independence has been won and we must take this into account. Jim did not elaborate how imperialism dominates the third world politically in the present situation although he indicated that a major role is played by the US world policeman and that the rich countries mercilessly plunder the poor. Jim wrote his views in a polemic vs. Chicago comrades views in which he stated that he was opposing trying to force the present world into the 5 point definition of imperialism which Lenin used to describe imperialism in his day. He stated that while the world had changed on the particular point of territorial division, that Lenin's basic substance of Lenin's analysis was still true. (The dynamics of world development behind Lenin's views on territorial division of the world are not that there are colonies and semi-colonies, but that imperialism is not one world monopoly but a number of monopoly bourgeoisies contending with each other that are primarily based in their national states. That these imperialist national states (Great Powers) strive to win political advantage for their bourgeoisie through alliances, through entangling weaker states in agreements which give them special privileges over their competitors, striving to dominate weaker states for maximum privilege and security of interests. Colonization is only the ultimate extreme of this tendency. Jim does not challenge this tendency. He simply describes the present situation where the former colonies are independent and interests of the various imperialists roughly balance in most countries. The question is left open.) 2. Manny while agreeing with Jim's thesis raised that there are agencies such as IMF which while mainly economic

play a political role and dictate to third world countries. He also pointed out that the US has played a crucial role in the world system as the world policeman which has been approved by that system and from which position it appropriates for itself special privileges not accorded to other powers. 3. Joseph raised that we have been going through a period of that might earlier have been called ultra imperialism where the imperialists jointly and in bourgeois democratic manner among themselves dominate and exploit the less developed countries, with this exploitation being enforced by certain international imperialist political forms such as IMF, World Bank, G7, UN. (He leaves out the role of US as world policeman although probably by oversight). He also later stated that he thinks that this period of seeming ultra imperialism will come to an end with a fight among the imperialists. But he does not go into the historical development of the current situation or its dynamics. 4. Michael's views are contained in his report to the 4th Congress which present a view of the world that is both very concrete and not in contradiction to the basics of Lenin's theses on imperialism. He further raised some questions about the degree of connection between the development of better off strata in the capitalist countries and imperialist exploitation of the less developed countries. And he stated that he felt we needed to look into the question more and cited the example of the dominance of reformism in the workers movement in extremely poor countries as an issue that is hard to explain by our traditional views on the question.

b: "that a perspective for socialist revolution is not valid for the developing countries until socialism is achieved in all the advanced countries"

Once again this is not true. Michael has raised that he does not believe a poor country especially a poor small country can go to socialism alone. That there needs to be an international revolutionary movement and success in a number of developed

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# Against sectarianism - Part one -

The Boston Communist Study Group has announced their existence in a statement dated Feb. 5—and with a savage attack on anyone who dares criticize the views of Jim (SFBA), Manny (NY), Michael (Detroit) or Joe (Boston), who ended up as the CC majority. Comrade Joe and the other Boston comrades have definite talent and ability, and they have long experience of work. But the BCSG have devoted a good part of their statement to throwing as much mud as possible on any critics and to denying the value of discussing controversial ideas.

The BCSG start by taking up the question of the Chicago journal. What is their first reaction to the fact that the Chicago comrades are continuing work in their local area and also are cooperating with others on looking into controversial issues? Do they take encouragement in the continued production of the political issues of the *Chicago Workers Voice*? Do they see something positive in the inauguration of the *CWV Theoretical Supplement*? Do they welcome a journal which is an open forum for all comrades to express their views on controversial questions?

No, like true sectarians, they see it only as a “competing proposal”. There is to be one and one journal, and it has to be Boston’s. If Boston doesn’t want to have an open forum, then no one is to have one. And the Boston-plan journal is to tightly control the views it allows. Oh yes, the BCSG say that “are not against debates or polemics with others or among ourselves”—but their brutal attitude to the *CWV Theoretical Supplement* speaks for itself. They are not against discussion—so long as it’s not public, so long as the wrong people aren’t criticized, so long as the wrong issues aren’t raised, etc., etc.

Much of the BCSG statement is a diatribe to scare away their supporters from having anything to do with the former party minority, with the Chicago comrades being used as bogeymen. Why, the BCSG imply, you have to agree with the Chicago comrades on all their views, you have to have a grievance about the Fourth Congress (well, the wrong grievance against the Fourth Congress, because the former CC majority hardly is fond of the Fourth Con-

gress either), etc.

There’s a delicious irony in seeing the BCSG talk about grievances, because a good part of their statement is constant whining that Michael, Jim, and Manny have been wronged. They work to establish a mood that drowns every discussion in grievances, in rearguing the material conditions for the party’s demise ad infinitum, etc. They refuse to see anything of value in the views of comrades they disagree with. They have joined with some others to organize a lynch-mob attitude to anyone who dares to criticize one of the elite.

The BCSG received the E-mail (Detroit #19) with my article on the debate on imperialism which appeared in the first issue of the *CWV Theoretical Journal*. The full issue also has the transcript of the discussion on imperialism at the Fourth Congress; Jim’s article from *Information Bulletin #77*; the report to the Fourth Congress on the revolutionary struggle in the dependent countries by Manny; and an introductory statement explaining the purpose of the journal.

The BCSG immediately jumped to reply: it’s not clear they even waited to get the *CWV* itself. Their concern was simply to declare that my statement is “a marvel of sophistry, subject changing and distortion”.

Instead of looking into the issues about the world that I raised, their attitude was simply to defend anything Manny, Jim or Michael has said, reinterpreting it as necessary. If Manny says that the role of world agencies only “verges” on the political, they reinterpret that to mean these agencies “play a political role.” If Jim says that the territorial division of the world is a thing of the past, the BCSG say that he really has left this question open. If Jim and Manny deny in theory the political side of the present world order, the BCSG statement says that no, they really recognize it after all. The BCSG may have a lot of questions about various issues, but it’s 100% sure about personalities: the favored ones are good, the critics are bad.

This sectarian attitude of the BCSG statement is mistaken; it hinders an airing of the controversies; and it prevents

comrades from getting the benefit they should from the clash of views. If comrades want to be able to investigate the world, they need to have a picture of different possibilities and ideas that exist. Serious thought about the world, serious investigation, isn’t solely a question of collecting facts. It also requires thought about what is the overall picture and what are the various views that have come up about this. Such thought encourages investigation to look into matters that might otherwise be overlooked; it allows a critical approach to source materials; and it motivates closer attention to the facts. Without attention to the overall issues, it is hard to tell the significance of any fact, and one just wanders aimlessly.

## Does imperialism exist?

One of the important issues concerning the current world situation is whether imperialism exists. This is the issue raised by the collapse of the colonial system. It was one of the main points raised in my article, as well in one of my previous articles, “Some Notes on Theoretical Issues—Part Two” (Detroit #10, Nov. 15). I pointed out that the changes in the world situation raised the question of whether imperialism exists, even if no comrade were raising this. And a number of the questions that are being debated revolve on it:

\*\*Is there a political side to the domination and subordination of countries that presently exist? This is the question raised by Jim and Manny. It directly affects the question of imperialism, since the question Jim raises with respect to neo-colonialism applies fully to imperialism: what is left of the concept of imperialism if there is no political side to it.

\*\*The question of the territorial division of the world was raised by comrade Jim originally to show that the political domination and subordination of countries no longer existed as much of a factor of the world situation.

\*\*The issue of whether imperialism is progressive as a historical stage of capitalist development was raised by comrade



Manny, and this tends by its formulation to reduce imperialism to mainly the productive and organizational forces of monopoly capitalism.

\*\*And finally, another issue is arising now, the question of "ultra-imperialism". Ultra-imperialism has the name "imperialism" in it, but it refers to a concept that essentially supersedes the idea of imperialism.

The BCSG statement basically denigrates the debate over imperialism, and suggests it is all a matter of strawmen and distortions. This denies the existence and value of the debate, and not just with Chicago comrades, that goes back to before the Fourth Congress.

### **Is there a political side to the present world order**

Comrade Jim transformed the debate in our party with his article in IB #77 in October 1992. This indeed is what he aimed to do. He wanted to raise "a more general theoretical issue that still needs addressing" and that had "to do with the theory of imperialism and the less developed countries." It said he wanted "to pose and provoke thinking about this critical issue of analysis of the contemporary world." (p. 5, col. 1, all page references in this article are to the *CWV Theoretical Supplement*, Jan. 25 issue.)

I and others have pondered the issue he raised. However, oddly enough, comrade Jim and the BCSG have changed their minds about provoking thinking. Jim says there are no "political differences", and the BCSG say there is just "sloganeering against straw men". Apparently it was one thing to talk about the value of provocative discussion when one could, say, simply tee off against comrade Rene. But when the controversy became a bit wider, the former CC majority decided that it was time to stop.

Yet the issue raised by comrade Jim won't go away. What is the nature of imperialism today?

Jim approached this question from the point of view of looking at the 2nd Congress resolution "On the revolutionary struggle in the oppressed and dependent countries: the national liberation movement, the democratic revolution and the socialist revolution". Jim discusses its analysis of neo-colonialism and states: "The economic part, loans, etc., is explained. But it couldn't explain the politi-

cal part. It couldn't explain it because neo-colonialism as a political concept is not readily explainable. But then, what does neo-colonialism mean minus political domination? I don't think it means much." (p. 37, col. 3)

The same question, of course, can be asked of imperialism. What does the concept of imperialism mean if there is no political domination involved? Jim's statement was actually a challenge for anyone to show the political part of the present world order.

The BCSG statement says that this really isn't an issue, and Jim really isn't raising this. They write that "Jim did not elaborate how imperialism dominates the third world politically in the present situation although he indicated that a major role is played by the US world policeman and that the rich countries mercilessly plunder the poor."

But the Second Congress resolution did both these things; and it certainly went with gusto into the U.S. role as world policeman. Yet Jim says that this resolution couldn't explain the political side of domination in today's world. If the BCSG believe the U.S. role as world cop is sufficient to establish that political domination exists, they might, say, discuss why they believe it is so, and why Jim doesn't.

### **Verging on honesty**

Meanwhile comrade Manny too doubted the existence of the political side of the world system in his report to the Forth Congress. He put forward the view that colonialism=exploitation by political means, or looting, and independence=market forces. This too raises the issue of whether imperialism is a meaningful concept. And this may perhaps have been Manny's intention, since he raised the question of whether imperialism really is a well-defined phenomenon or not. By the end of his report, Manny suggests that imperialism is just an "appearance" over the "essence" which is world capitalism. Of course, he evenhandedly suggests one must deal both with the appearance and the essence.

The BCSG don't comment on the general viewpoint that Manny put forward on the world. They just ignore it. Instead they try to redefine one of Manny's statements to make everything OK. They write that Manny believes that "there are agencies such as IMF which while mainly

economic play a political role and dictate to third world countries." This is just blowing smoke. The BCSG revise Manny's words ever so slightly, just enough so Manny's meaning is obscured. Manny wrote that "the essential role of these institutions is economic" but their role "verges on the political". (p. 40, col. 1) To "verge" on the political and to be political are not the same thing. Despite the fact that Manny described these institutions as dictating to various countries, Manny would only say that the role of the agencies went "beyond the economic in the pure and simple sense of the term." That's all. This was obviously a formulation to avoid saying that they are political, in the full and ordinary meaning of the term.

Thus BCSG reinterpreted Manny's analysis. These agencies don't just "verge on the political", but they now "play a political role". What's a few qualifiers between friends?

But it was not an accident or sloppy writing that Manny says that this system, with its dictation to various countries, just "verges on the political". It fits in with his general view of the shift from politics to economics in the world situation. And he was also speaking against the views I put forward in a letter to him a few weeks before the Fourth Congress that stressed the political role of the world agencies. Comrade Joe of the BCSG knows this, because I sent him a copy of this letter awhile ago.

### **Getting entangled with economics and politics**

Is it just playing with words to worry about the generalities about economics and politics that Manny and Jim raise? Should we just, as the BCSG statement implies, say that, after all, in practice Manny and Jim recognize politics, so who cares about their theorizing?

I think the BCSG's statement itself shows the dangers of such an approach. In their statement, they try to show how helpful Manny's report was on the question of economics and politics. But what they got from Manny's report was that political issues are in theory realizable under capitalism, but economic issues are not. And this type of general statement led them astray.

The BCSG says the invasion of Pan-

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# On Class Structure: Reply to Boston #5

This is in reply to points on class structure and their implications for Marxism made by Boston comrades in "Boston #5" dated 2-5-94.

They begin these points on p. 6 of their e-mail contribution by saying:

"At the 4th Congress Joe presented a report based on our local research which raised a number of questions about changes in class structure in the U.S....

"One of the most troubling issues raised in the report is the growth of the professional/managerial strata. Together these two strata make up 25 per cent of the workforce ... This is more people than all the production workers in manufacturing, all the transport workers and all the unskilled and semi-skilled manual workers in the service industries such as restaurants, hospitals etc. put together. And the professional/managerial strata are growing faster than any other section of the workforce and have been for decades."

Here they are trying to bring out the importance of the professional/managerial strata. And they connect this to Joe's report at the 4th Congress.

This surprised me, because I didn't remember Joe's report making this point about the importance of the professional/managerial strata. I certainly didn't remember it being raised as "one of the most troubling issues" for Marxism or for the MLP's orientation.

Anyway, I went back and re-read Joe's report (published as the article "The changing composition and stratification of the working class," in The Workers' Advocate Supplement, Vol. 9, #2 dated

March 20, 1993).

It turns out that, in fact, there are some similar figures and facts cited in that report. But the emphasis is entirely different.

Joe's report brought out the falling standards of living over the last two decades for the working class as a whole. It brought out that job creation today is mostly in low-wage industries. It brought out that clerical jobs, which are rapidly increasing in number, have been falling in relative pay pretty steadily throughout the century. For many facts on this, see especially the section headed **As the U.S. becomes more parasitic, conditions for the lower masses deteriorate**. In this section it's noted that:

"75 per cent of the new jobs created during the 80s were in the low-paying retail trade and service industries. The same will be true in the 90s. Although in these industries there are many high-paid professional jobs, the majority are semi-skilled or unskilled clerk, cook, orderly, cashier, and waitress-type jobs. And a growing percentage of these jobs are part-time [and temporary, I might add]."

This section concludes with an organizing call:

"It is this lower mass upon which we must base ourselves. And it is this section, as the Los Angeles rebellions show, that is being radicalized...." (See p. 20 of the WAS reprint.)

"Boston #5" purports to be a continuation of Joe's report. But actually its orientation is completely different. No longer is there a call to concentrate on the lower mass. Instead the orientation is:

"...given the size of the middle

strata today even to begin a revolution a major portion of this strata must be kicked out of its rut and won to the side of the proletariat." (p. 8) Before, the orientation was to organize the working class; now, we can't even begin without first winning over the middle strata. And further:

"The socialist revolution needs both the 'plebeian' class instinct ... and the technical knowledge that is concentrated in the professional/technical (and managerial) strata."

So organizing for revolution is no longer a matter of concentrating on the workers, but of effecting a marriage between the workers and professionals, technical experts, and managers. After demanding this as the new orientation, "Boston #5" waxes pessimistic about the chances of actually carrying it out:

"So far this century optimistic assessments of the ease of achieving a correct marriage or any marriage between these two aspects or optimism about the proletarianization of the professional/technical strata have been proven wrong."

So now they're in a big conundrum: to organize for socialism requires making a love match between the workers and the managers; but history has shown this to be very difficult. This seems like an insoluble problem.

But is this a problem with Marxism and the MLP's orientation, as "Boston #5" indicates, or simply a problem for "Boston #5"? The Boston comrades (including Joe) have created this problem for themselves by changing the class orientation given in Joe's report to the 4th Congress.

From: Pete, Detroit  
March 14, 1994



# Notes on Nigel Harris' book, *The End of the Third World*

I am sending the following notes as a contribution to the Theoretical Journal. They may be of use to comrades involved in discussions of imperialism and the lesser developed countries. These are notes I took a couple years ago on the book, *The End of the Third World*, by Nigel Harris. They do not constitute a book review, but are notes on the most controversial section of the book.

In his book Harris argues that the basis for a Third World political movement no longer exists because of the economic development that has taken place in former Third World countries. To illustrate economic development he examines six cases: the so-called Gang of Four (South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan) and the Latin American giants Brazil and Mexico.

There's useful information here. But from this Harris tries to draw the further conclusion that there is an actual shift of power, a shift of locus of economic power, from the old established industrial countries to former Third World countries. He tries to prove this with certain graphs and charts of economic activity. It is this attempt that I criticize in the following notes.

## Chapter 4. A Global Manufacturing System

### section "The Relative Decline of the Manufacturing Heartlands"

Harris is arguing that the relative economic importance of the old established industrial countries has declined since 1960. But his chart on p. 103 (Table 4.) doesn't bear this out. The big statistical "slip" he commits is in counting Japan as a "newcomer" and not one of the "old established" industrial countries. As Table 4 brings out, the shift from the "old established" is to Japan and hardly anyone else. If Japan had been counted as "old established" there would be practically no change.

Harris says, "The heart of the shift in shares [of world GDP] was from the old-established to the newcomers and the middle-income group." (p. 102)

Now check out the table: there was an increase in share by middle-income countries, but it was quite modest, from 12.7 to 16.7 per cent of world GDP. Note that this group includes 26% of the world's population, so they are still far from having their "fair share" of world GDP.

Now check out the "newcomers": they increased their share by almost 10 per cent, from 8.5 to 18.0 per cent of world GDP. But notice that Japan increased its share, alone, from 4.7 to 14.7 per cent of world GDP. So the ten per cent gain by newcomers was entirely due to Japan; other newcomers in fact decreased their share (since the total increase was a little less than ten per cent).

Harris has examined the cases of the Gang of Four, Mexico and Brazil to show that some Third World countries did in fact develop. Now he presents a table purportedly showing that the First World countries declined. But it doesn't show that. The big success story in the table is not the Gang of Four, Mexico or Brazil; it's Japan. The table does not show Third World countries taking over First World countries; what it shows is Japan moving into topflight First World status.

This is not to deny economic development in many poor countries. They did develop. But so did the old established powers. And the old established powers don't need to gain very much to maintain their large portion of world GDP, because of their previous position. A small percentage gain in the industrial powerhouses can mean a big jump in world GDP, and in those countries' share of world GDP.

As well, developing countries actually depend for their advance-

ment on increased production in the advanced countries. Harris himself provides an explanation of this phenomenon on p. 103, where he points out that as developing countries pushed to industrialize in the 1970s, they had to buy much more in the way of engineering products from the developed world; exports of such goods from the developed countries tripled in the period 1973-79.

The gain by Japan is about equal to the decline of the U.S. This is the real story established by the table: the relative decline of the U.S. and the relative advance of Japan.

Now look at another major fact lying dormant in Table 4., a fact which Harris understates, saying: "The low-income group's share of world product was reduced, but in the case of manufacturing it was slightly increased." "Slightly increased" is right — from 3.1 to 3.7 per cent. That's hardly worth mentioning, especially when you consider that the low-income countries comprise 49% of the world's population. Imagine that — half the world's population, and their total share of world GDP actually fell, from 7.8 to 5.5 per cent. **Half** the world is down to only **five** per cent of GDP. There's no "relative decline" of the old established countries here!

(Note: this doesn't mean that standard of living in the low-income countries necessarily declined. Since world GDP generally increased, theirs probably generally increased, and may even have increased per capita in some countries. But their **relative** share, as a portion of world GDP, declined.)

This is a grim statistic. A book could be written on this, but Harris wouldn't be interested.

From: Pete, Detroit  
March 11, 1994

# Letter from LA

Dear Cde. Joseph (Detroit)

Thanks for sending the recent polemics, et. al. Yours of Detroit (#22 Feb. 10, 1994) was excellent. Had I only read Boston (#5, Feb. 5, 1994) I might have (and so might the others in the L.A. Unit), been taken in and deceived by their distortions and sophism.

It really was the "How dare you" tone of this Boston polemic and their hostility to Chicago even daring to publish the inner party polemics of the last period of the MLP that I think also helped tip their mitt concerning their more concealed agenda: their own die-hard partisanship for the outright revisionist views of Manny (concerning "progressive imperialism") and the flawed conclusions of Jim (concerning the alleged abatement of political struggle and influence of the big powers vis a vis the now inde-

pendent nations in which the nature of capitalism impels the big bullies to muscle in and encroach on the societies of the weaker states).

I would also like to ask you some questions about territorial redivision (division). Jim seems to think this is outmoded, superseded by the metropolis (G-7 group) etc. & domination of the world market. Where they have colluded for hegemony. But in a period of such a vacuum created by the end of the Cold War. Does this not portend a greater scramble for world markets, cheaper labor, raw materials? Can this not be seen by current trade conflicts between the USA & Japan? And what about the new trade blocs taking shape: NAFTA, E.U., Asian Tiger groups? If tariffs do not "work". If "dumping" cannot expand the market enough. Will not the monopoly bourgeoisies of different lands have a longer leash for "politics by other

means" (wars, subversion etc.) as Clausewitz was able to see?

As concerns the theoretical journal, I am glad the Chicago Section is publishing! The only criticism I have is that at this time anyway only leftists and "radical" middle class professors seen really interested in the hot issues being debated. I also hope future issues of the Journal will include articles on current class struggles (politics, tactics, strategies etc.) If Boston wants to put out their own journal nobody is issuing banning orders! Where's their beef?

Fraternally,  
Neil

P.S. I have sold 2 journals at a pro-immigrant picket last week!

2-20-90

## On Imperialism

Dear Comrades,

I would like to hail the first issue of the "Theoretical Supplement" of the *Chicago Workers' Voice* containing articles on the debate on imperialism. The liquidationists represented by Jim and Manny have long attempted to impose their views as a 'fait accompli' by refusing to subject themselves to the kind of debate we are now beginning to witness. Joseph's article describes very well their theoretical bankruptcy, and in support of his views, I would like to add my observations on the history of the 20th century and its relationship to Lenin's theory of imperialism.

The central points in Lenin's theory of imperialism which differentiate it from a mere form of rhetorical denunciation (name-calling) are the five points which characterize imperialism as a special stage of capital-

ism, summarized in Chapter 7 as follows:

"1) the concentration of production and capital has developed to such a high stage that it has created monopolies which play a decisive role in economic life; 2) the merging of bank capital with industrial capital, and the creation, on the basis of this 'finance capital' of a financial oligarchy; 3) the export of capital as distinguished from the export of commodities acquires exceptional importance; 4) the formation of international monopolist capitalist combines which share the world among themselves, and 5) the territorial division of the whole world among the biggest capitalist powers is completed."

That such points were an accurate description of the world economy in 1916 at the height of World War I is hard to argue with, and these

same points characterized international political and economic relations up to the time of World War II. At the outset of that war, Britain and France maintained their hold on vast stretches of colonial empire in Africa and South Asia. The United States' colonial empire was directly confined to the Philippines; however, it had for a while been developing the political and economic techniques needed for a more sophisticated form of domination through the use of local bourgeois agents which had been cultivated throughout Latin America, along with the frequent use of "gunboat diplomacy" to enforce this arrangement. Germany was flexing newly strengthened industrial and military muscles, and looking towards all its neighbors as a field for redivision of the world appropriate to this newly felt power. Italy likewise felt deprived of the spoils;

it had a few possessions in Africa and hungered to expand into the Balkans and other areas. Japan had taken big bites out of China, but this was also a territory that the United States had begun to covet, and Chiang Kaishek was taking upon himself the role of defender of Western interests in China. The Soviet Union had completed its consolidation of bureaucratic state-capitalist power after the purges of the 30s, and had reached an agreement on the division of Eastern Europe with Germany in the Non-Aggression Pact of 1939. The other countries of Europe were economically allied with one or the other side of the emerging conflict, while in Asia, Turkey and Iran (which had experienced a rebirth of nationalism) were testing the winds to see which way the conflict would go.

The resulting conflict shattered the power of victor and vanquished alike among the European powers. The postwar world could not be rebuilt on the basis of the prewar one in Africa and Asia because Britain and France would not be able to turn aside the emerging demands of the native bourgeoisie in these countries for formal political independence. In this crisis, the United States imposed upon them a program for coupling economic domination with formal independence through international institutions such as the UN, the IMF, the World Bank, and the GATT (which was meant as a temporary expedient when an International Trade Organization could not be founded, but has become an institution in its own right).

The Soviet Union, however, would not agree to all the parts of this program, and sought to divide Europe to ensure that its own sphere of influence, which was founded on the basis of the territory taken by the Red Army and its allied forces while defeating Germany and Italy, remained intact. The Cold War developed out of this situation, and the resulting international situation is the point of dispute in the present debate. The leading political groups in the main bourgeois countries, US, Britain, and France, worked out a system of international institutions and alliances which preserved some of the influence of the old colonial powers over their former

colonies in monetary and trade matters, while providing formal independence and membership in the established international institutions. Through this arrangement, the financial oligarchies in Europe and North America spread their power around much of the world. Germany, Japan, and Italy were allowed to join this structure and collective security pacts such as NATO, SEATO, and the Baghdad Pact were worked out to give these arrangements a military side. The US cultivated a number of regional proxies, generously supplied with weapons purchased on credit, all in the name of 'containment', fueling the already bloated defense industry with government subsidies.

These political arrangements greased the flow of capital throughout the 'free' world. I speak of this as the flow of capital because the intention of exporting money and goods to the less developed countries, the former colonies, was to exploit the labor of these countries and produce increased stocks of raw materials for export to the metropolises, which would turn these materials into finished goods for the entire world market. Thus the main features of Lenin's theory of imperialism became even more highly developed through the international institutions of the Western world. Spheres of influence were arranged by diplomacy within the Western alliance, and the mutual exploitation of the former colonies proceeded apace.

However, all did not proceed peacefully in this fashion. A large portion of the world was part of the Soviet camp, which worked out its own set of international institutions, trade arrangements, and 'friendship pacts'. To be sure, these were not as successful or as artfully arranged as their Western counterparts, but they served the same purposes, and competed with the Western pacts for the allegiance of upstart cliques in various countries. India, Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, and other countries at various times sought to play one side against another in the international arena. Not all the ruling circles in the former colonies were docile lapdogs, and many sought to use their military alliances to settle local scores in vari-

ous ways. Over time, a number of fractures developed in this system. A large-scale split in the Soviet camp took place when China decided to stake out an independent foreign policy as 'champion' of the former colonies, by advancing its own imperialist aims while denouncing the imperialism of the other powers. The Western powers could not hope to keep all these ambitious local rulers in check at all times through peaceful means, so many times military interventions occurred to stabilize an inherently sensitive system. All these developments had their effects in the post-Cold War era which we are now experiencing.

Broadly speaking, the Cold War may be subdivided into three periods: the period of disintegration of the major colonial empires, the Vietnam War, and the period of disintegration of the Soviet empire. Each of these periods had its peculiar features in terms of international power structure. Over the course of the Cold War, the burden of heavy defense spending has sapped the economies of the US and the former Soviet Union alike. Meanwhile, the countries of Western Europe and Japan have rebuilt their economies and spread their influence largely free from the burden of military expenditures, and they still wish to rely on the US to provide this service to them. But their interests do not always coincide, and there are more and more stresses being developed as the post-Cold War period unfolds.

We are living in a period of shifting international arrangements. The old arrangements are still encumbering the efforts of newly strengthened powers to take their 'rightful place', and the exact boundaries of spheres of influence are not yet worked out. The existing institutions may or may not prove adequate to allow for new power relationships, and not all the ambitious local imperialists will win a place in these institutions peacefully. Here I am not just talking of European powers, because a number of Asian countries have reached a level of development where they too can play the role of local imperialist as well. Certainly India, Indonesia, and Pakistan, not to speak of Iraq and Iran, are attempting to step into whatever power vacuum they may find



attractive. So, we may be seeing a world of 'one, two, many imperialisms' developing; certainly a risky and disquieting prospect that requires careful analysis. But the features of Lenin's theory of imperialism are always present as the power of international finance capital grows more and more pronounced underneath all of these political developments.

I have attempted to develop in a somewhat abstract form a picture of recent history which seems to me to relate the facts of this history with the theory of imperialism. It is not a wooden picture of Western superpowers and oppressed Third World countries, nor is it an idyllic era of free trade and 'ultra-imperialism'. But the oppression of the peoples of the former colonies and less developed countries does exist, and their oppressors are both the ruling classes of

the metropolises and their local bourgeois as well. And 'ultra-imperialism' may come to be the order of the day for a while, in the form of the mutual exploitation of the less developed world by the metropolises, but this arrangement is to be denounced and opposed with all our might rather than that praised as the wave of the future. For this 'ultra-imperialism' is inherently unstable and must sooner or later give way to a period of intensified military and political conflict, because wars are a natural outcome of the imperialist system and they are ultimately the only way that new redivisions of the existing spheres of influence can come about. For nothing has changed the rapacious, predatory character of capitalism; it has only grown into its most advanced stage, wherein it has spread throughout the whole world and revolution-

ized all the older forms of economy and brought them by a painful and destructive road to the brink of the socialist revolution. It remains for the proletariat to carry out this revolution and sweep away the garbage of the old world and use the new forces of the laboring classes to reconstruct the world. The proletariat will take the existing level of organization as a starting point but chop away all that is oppressive and enslaving about these institutions, and bring about a new world free from the international exploitation which underlies the political arrangements of today.

Comradely yours,  
Phil, Seattle

13-Feb-94

# ***Ultra-imperialism?***

The debates over imperialism began in bourgeois economic science in the decades of 1880-90. It was already the eve of the 20th century when the fundamental works in English appeared, J.A. Hobson and two Austrian Marxists, Otto Bauer and Rudolf Hilferding. However, as is known, it was Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin and Bukharin who definitively restored this fundamental topic for revolutionary theory.

They were living in the embers of the Anglo-Boer War, the Spanish-American War, after the Russo-Japanese War, not to mention the threats which weighed on the heart of Europe by virtue of the great power colonial rivalries. Some good social-reformist souls at that time proposed a peaceful and humanitarian capitalism, which would voluntarily renounce the lust for gunpowder, for overseas conquest, and for inter-imperialist confrontation.

It was in this atmosphere that the theory of Kautsky grew (taking up again the previous essential theses of

Bernstein), the theory of the arrival of ultra-imperialism. It dealt with the more or less apologetic prediction of the formation of a type of voluntary and cooperative association of the imperialist nations, which would peacefully regulate their conflicts of interest, limiting the cycle of the world economic process. Lenin attacked, with even more violence, this Kautskyite thesis which he clearly perceived as an evil political trend, in order to recognize finally that, in pure theory, it was perfectly conceivable: "There is no doubt that the trend of development is towards a single world trust absorbing all enterprises without exception. But this development proceeds in such circumstances, at such a pace, through such contradictions, conflicts and upheavals — not only economic but political, national, etc. — that inevitably imperialism will burst and capitalism will be transformed into its opposite long before one world trust materializes, before the 'ultra-imperialist', world-wide amalgamation of national finance capitals takes place."<sup>1</sup>

Eighty years and various world wars (hot and cold) later, capitalism is here, although its appearance has changed a lot. What has become, then, of ultra-imperialism? At first glance, this is its golden age. We have the G7, with its twice-a-year summits, which today already has the intention of regulating and harmonizing a universal economic cycle. There is the small club of the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, the European Economic Community, NATO, GATT and the IMF. The European powers are themselves more or less formally embarked on a process of political confederation. Will harmony finally reign among the national families of big capital? There is no lack of those who assert that the capitalists have made the slogan of the *Communist Manifesto* their own, but turned it fundamentally upside down.<sup>2</sup> We have to look at the question in a little more detail.

## **Original Transition**

It is my opinion that we find our-



selves in a transition phase. But in general terms, in spite of the current realignments provoked by the overthrow of the Soviet house, the structure of contemporary imperialism is still largely based on the *pax americana* which was erected at the end of the Second World War (the imperialist eras are punctuated with world wars). It was the collapse of the European empires and colonial preserves and of their monopoly regime; it was the huge expansion of the multinational corporations of North American capital; it was the dollar as the reserve of internationally recognized value; the American fleet and the American military bases strategically positioned all over the world. A destroyed Europe and Japan appeared easy prey for the energetic Yankee capitalism, which allowed itself the luxury of financing their reconstruction, trying naturally to impose on them a subordinate status in world capitalist accumulation.

This strategy resulted in plentiful returns for some time, until, at the turn of the decade of the 60s to the 70s, it clearly began to be put in jeopardy. The large European and Japanese capitalists joined the game. They obtained rates of labor productivity equivalent to the North American rate or even better, took control of strategic sectors and high level sectors, and created great transnational networks of their own. The commercial balance of trade of the U.S.A. went into deficit. The cycle of financing the empire by simply producing and circulating federal money ended, the external cash indebtedness began (\$3.1 trillion in January, 1992, almost 30 times the debt of Brazil, the second largest and the pride of the Third World). While the industrial fabric and the social apparatus grew old and torn, a consuming, unbridled schizophrenia continued feeding the hole in the commercial balance. The federal budget is, thus, structurally in deficit in spite of all the protests and good intentions to the contrary. The global superpower is not ashamed to compete directly with less developed countries in search of financing, grabbing up the disposable capital on the international market without ceremony, contributing decisively to maintaining the high rates

of interest which weigh upon the naked and pleading "protected ones" of the IMF.

Today we have reached a curious and somewhat paradoxical situation. The imperialist superpower is just a little less than completely fallen, but it keeps as its military protectorates (and under its political and brutal cultural and ideological influence) the two most promising poles of capital accumulation: Japan, and Europe, under definite German leadership. These, in turn, brought up in the shadow of Uncle Sam, turn deaf ears to his calls that they take on "more responsibilities". They have their supply lines for energy and raw materials, and their export routes and their external investments protected by the Pentagon (via the U.N. Security Council) and they find that it is very good this way. They prefer to pay some bills when it is insisted upon and to continue subscribing to the bonds of the North American public debt.

#### Unstable Commitment

In my view, this commitment is false and unstable. In view of a probable (but not absolutely assured) scenario of the rising decay of the North American economy, an increase of its arrogance and of its demands would be certain. Its evolution into the role of a mercenary power, feeding itself from pure rape and extortion of surplus value produced and realized elsewhere. The superexploitation of labor in Latin America will increase. The threats and actual violence against the Arab and Moslem world will increase. The global military presence of the North Americans will be maintained by an institutionalization of some type of protection duty over the other capitalist metropolises. The fragile points of this system: 1) The armed force being North American (although third parties are paying), it is natural that it would care for its national capital as a son and for others as a stepson; 2) The European and Asiatic bourgeoisies line up happily behind this system ... as long as their internal rate of profit doesn't go too low, because in that situation, they have a sudden shock and these bourgeoisies become swollen with patriotic pride; 3) Sharp

economic decline and some external military reverses could create a revolutionary situation in the United States, sharpening its multiple internal tensions in an enlarged replay of the final years of the 60s. With a queen in check, all the world structure of imperialist domination would be suspended in the air and would be in immediate danger of collapse.

Another scenario (this is Clinton's direction, considering the logic of his intervention in the economy) is regionalization and the politics of autonomous blocks (E.C., NAFTA, Asian East) with the rearmament of Japan (danger of collision with China, to which, without doubt, hegemony in the region will fall at the appointed time), and of Europe (?...). Each one tills his own fields. The North American military retreat is being done gradually, negotiated inch by inch, without leaving power voids. It is the end of super-imperialism and the return to a typical scenario of global inter-imperialist competition. It remains to be seen if the evolution in this direction can be done peacefully. While it is true that there appears to exist some consensus on this among the ruling elites, it is also true that an imperialist realignment of this magnitude is never accomplished without severe tensions (and war, real or virtual as was the case with the Soviet Union). In questions of this nature, the desire of politicians is a small factor in the face of the colossal power and implacable logic of huge masses of monopoly capital.

A war of "high intensity", however, is not very probable. The inter-imperialist confrontation has already ceased to be frontal and territorial, instead becoming barely even confrontational, highly mediated through symbols, with all the real physical struggle given to intermediaries. All that has made more noticeable the enormous and growing influence which continues to take control of the mass communications media, the battle to make specific characters of the ethos of particular civilizations achieve and gain recognition as universal, to promote the values and cultural topics linked to the elites of the most powerful nations, of the economic interests based in rationalized organization.

Ideology and spectacle. Only the poor will spill real blood, while their bosses will be involved in more or less tumultuous debate centered on the axes ("security", commercial, monetary, financial) of a system finally dedicated to common progress.

The case of a single center of accumulation becoming the lord of the whole globe will remain, thus, certainly as a theoretical hypothesis, but it is clearly outside of our historical horizon. The dynamic of imperialism in our time is similar to the continental plates of the planet. They live in an unstable and conflict-filled equilibrium, supporting each other against the pressure of the interior magma over which they sit. It is not inconceivable that they would come to unite, forming a unitary crust. Stasis does not exist, nor is there sufficient consistency and stability for it. In the same way, a new global super-imperialism or an ultra-imperialism agreed to among various national or regional powers is thinkable in the future. But for such a political superstructure to have stability, we would certainly no longer be in good old capitalism but in a different mode of ultra-monopolistic production, polished, eugenic, based in a sophisticated and massive machine of ideological conditioning, of the type of certain negative utopias of science fiction. We have gotten this far, it falls to us to renew the hopeful expectation of Lenin cited above. Above all, to fight for it.

Joao Paulo Monteiro

1) Lenin, "Preface to N. Bukharin's

Pamphlet", in *Collected Works* (Moscow, 1964, English edition), Vol. 22, p. 107.

2) Curiously, Samir Amin in his latest work ("L'Empire du Chaos" Harmattan, Paris, 1991), in the collection by Michel Beard (*L'Economie Mondiale dans les années 80*, La Découverte, 1989) gives some credit to this thesis, speaking of an "internationalization" of capital which still awaits (and is being heatedly debated in the absence of) its transition into a unified political superstructure of the U.S.-Europe-Japan triangle.

However, it would not be natural that it would come to this to definitively resolve this question, it seems to me that there is an error here. An increase (more than proportional to economic growth) of three factors are cited in favor of this new thesis: commerce, investments, and technological agreements between the three corners of the triad. A "multinational technocracy" would thus be in formation: agreements between Toshiba/IBM/Hitachi/Texas Instruments and Hewlett-Packard, General Magic/AT&T/Motorola/Sony/Mitsubishi/Philips, etc., etc. But huge trusts and international consortiums were already a reality on the eve of the Great War of 14-18... There is nothing extraordinary in certain firms (alerted by their respective espionage agencies) entering into technological agreements with others in order to pursue common projects, naturally with assured mutual advantages. Enemies as intransigent as General Motors and Honda do so regularly. There is no doubt that capital in search

of another 5% would stab father and mother and extend its hand to Beelzebub in the seventh circle of hell. The question is this: where is the center of gravity of world accumulation? In a supposed transnational cabal of capitalist interests which mocks governments as useless archaeological objects? Or in huge monopoly groups intimately connected to the most powerful national States, with which they plot their world competitive strategy (economic policy, infrastructure, education, scientific investigation, supplies, markets, etc.) and under whose political, diplomatic and military protection they shelter themselves in case of necessity?

There is never enough vigilance against certain noisy novelties periodically trumpeted by bourgeois ideologies. Big "multinational" capital (regardless of all the interpenetrations and crisscrossed stock ownerships) knows well whom to turn to when it sees a threat to its rate of profit. Up-rooted itself, perhaps only a part of big British capital (Shell, B.P., Unilever, the bank and insurance of the City, remains of imperial spoils) that which, separated from the internal English market, seeks, as it did traditionally, the protection of a foreigner, the political and military protection of the Yankee. Would not here be one of the minor reasons for London's opposition to European politics and for its "Atlantic" tendency?

[Article from *Politica Operaria*, May/June 1993. CWV translation.]



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## Book Review:

# Noam Chomsky's *The Prosperous Few and the Restless Many*

By Comrade Mike, Chicago

The questions arise: What is the nature of imperialism in the 1990's? Does it exist, or is it a relic of nationalistic acquisition of capital? How does it operate, if it does exist? The more important questions for this forum are: Are these questions simply a matter of ideological and theoretical debate, and how do we, as progressive, principled leftists organize working and poor people to combat imperialism (or, if it is merely a relic, trends that mirror it)?

Noam Chomsky, a professor of linguistics at MIT, comes up with some partial answers in *The Prosperous Few and the Restless Many*. This pamphlet is an installment in the "Real Story Series" by Odonian Press. The series claims to put the "real story," hard political analysis not available in the mainstream press, in everyday language. In this capacity, it succeeds.

For Chomsky, the fact that capitalism has become concentrated in the hands of multinational corporations leads to the existence of imperialism. Multinational capital has created a "business community" that acts as a nation-state. Chomsky claims, we [multinational corporate interests] are creating a "new imperial age" with a "de facto world government" [quotes from what Chomsky calls "the business press" without mentioning the exact sources]. It has its own institutions—like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, trading structures like NAFTA and GAAT, executive meetings like the G-7 and the European Community bureaucracy.

In several interviews, he outlines the incursions of this "de facto world government" such as the military invasion of Somalia and the Gulf War. He sees the former as a PR job for the United States military: the enforcers of this world government. These are the military aspects of imperialism, the most obvious and blatant faces of it. When the tanks start rolling, patriots become even more rabidly nationalistic, and people already questioning the wisdom of the U.S. military machine and the economic world order become even more wary. However, it is the more insidi-

ous, economic invasion that deserves the most questioning and debate.

Chomsky makes the example of a poor farmer in a third world country. If American corporations flood the market he trades in with subsidized agriculture, he can no longer compete. He then turns to cash crops, the most profitable crops are used to make drugs. This subsidy raises profits for the American corporations, and incidentally raises the third world country's gross national product, so the business press touts this invasion as an "economic miracle." The same is true in industry, as *maquiladoras* outstrip national economies. In sweatshops like these, labor and environmental laws are suspended because they are "bad for business." They prevail not only in the "Third World," but in proposed "First World" "enterprise zones."

The trade agreements of the new world economic order, such as the EEC and NAFTA, become the glue of the multinational capitalist empire, over which such institutions as the World Bank preside as administrators. Contrary to the arguments of union bureaucracy hacks, NAFTA doesn't hurt American workers, not by moving "our" jobs to Mexico; they would be exported whether the agreement passed. The harm of the agreement comes in its provisions overriding reforms such as OSHA, minimum wage, benefits, workers' compensation and an array of other labor and environmental policies. The same is true in Mexico and Canada.

The *Prosperous Few and the Restless Many* explains this lack of accountability as the real threat to democracy, and to what Chomsky calls "democratic institutions" (whatever they are). The main theoretical accomplishment here is seen in three important points: multinational capital is creating its own "nationality"; these nations (individual corporations) are acting as an imperialist force with the United States and United Nations militaries as the strong arms of the invasion; and that the bulk of the invasion is occurring behind closed doors.

The other thrust of the Chomsky's

attack, as usual for him, is the American mainstream press. Predictably, the press advertises military invasions as peacekeeping missions or as humanitarian missions and economic and political invasions as economic miracles. Since the state of Israel is seen by Chomsky (accurately I believe) as an arm of the American military, the press masks that country's human rights abuses and focuses on Palestinian "terrorism."

The pamphlet's main weakness lies in its lack of alternatives. This may be a factor in Chomsky's position in society; while he critiques the political economy, he benefits far too much from it to threaten it too severely. The left, referred to only in one paragraph of one interview/lecture is called "peace and justice movements, whatever they are." There is no mention of the Marxist tradition, not even as an afterthought. His critique, however, is accurate. With no institutional inroads, the left can only achieve localized victories. Even the union movement cannot rally the masses, due to the losses they suffered under the Reagan administration.

The other major problem with *The Prosperous Few and the Restless Many* is that its portrayal of corporate power is too monolithic to be accurate. It is a vision many people share, and the most rational fear. However, if there is salvation for the left, it is in the fact that the right's interests are divided by competing for markets and PR shams (or ideological divisions, whichever you prefer). That common misconception is the greatest deterrent to leftist political action.

The question about whether imperialism exists, for me, is purely academic. Far too many people are watching their homes and neighborhoods, cities, schools and universities, governments and economies become corporate imperialist protectorates. The question remains, though: How do we organize and fight for change, we, Chomsky's restless many?

# What can be learned from the bloodbath regarding approaches to investigation?

The bloodbath among our x-mlp trends is starting to pick up momentum. This is tedious, but it is necessary and positive, overall. As long as the danger of putting too much time and focus into it at the expense of other work is avoided, it will assist the considering and sorting out of policies, activity, etc.

The debate is not some simple comparison of alternative possibilities, but a clash of many shades and combinations of ideologies. Each has megabytes of nuances and decades of invisible assumptions. This is how humans think, and politicians are among the most extreme in this regard.

There will inevitably be heat to the conflicts, because no approach to political work can proceed without some confidence in its particular priorities, and none of our trends can develop any confidence without tearing down, to some degree, the confidence in rival approaches. Without minimal confidence, nothing will get done.

Interesting enough, all the different viewpoints are flying the same flag: "More Study." Well, what are the different approaches to investigation? The Chicago-Detroit group has displayed features of its approach. Boston #5 makes some descriptions to help develop their investigation work, and this may reflect on similar orientations of persons in the Bay Area, New York, and elsewhere. I have some comments on those approaches. And I have some different thoughts of my own on investigation. Part I. On Detroit #19, follows below. Parts II. On Boston #5, and III. Thoughts on a framework for investigation, will be posted when they are completed.

## I. On Detroit #19

Detroit 19 (p. 2 in Theoretical Supplement 1-25-94) is useful to view the icon people's approach to investi-

gation, and for consideration of what such an approach is likely to yield. Boston 5 accurately describes the content of Detroit 19 (Detroit 22 is the same); there is nothing to add regarding Joseph's arguments per se. But I would like to emphasize two things. First of all, Detroit 19 proves the value of my article "the box part 2," as a handy quick reference guide to Joseph's debating methods. He used all the same tricks exactly as I described them—straw men, icons, casting the ROOAH, etc. If you familiarize yourself with his methods, you can quickly spot and skim past the diversionary arguments. Then you can spend time considering whatever the real issues on the subject are. Best of all you won't get dizzy.

Also, it is hilarious that, as Boston 5 shows, Joseph doesn't even disagree with any of the aspects of trends of development that were noted in the various reports on the less developed countries, so far as anyone knows. Whew! Nobody can strum the dialectics like Joseph. It's definitely an art form.

Wait, I can't resist dealing with at least one of Joseph's tricks, the "elite personalities." Boston 5 lists many of the trends of development noted in Jim's and Manny's reports, and a couple from Michael's. Every one of these observations is important for further study of the LDC issues. They're all important for learning about the "big picture" that Joseph alleges he would like us to understand. Who did the work and put these observations forward? Was it Joseph? Was it Mark? Was it any of the icon people who chime in with everyone else about the "theoretical crisis of Marxism" and the need to "study the world"? No, it wasn't. Leadership is a fact of life that Joseph might as well get used to instead of carping about.

Anyway, let's get on to the matter of approach to investigation.

Hidden in the blather of Detroit

19 is advocacy of monolithic censorship of investigation: "the problem with the views put forward by...Jim, Manny and Michael...is that they...wished to impose the resulting half-baked ideas on the party without even a clear discussion of what was at stake." Interesting. Study is done, reports are prepared, they are distributed to everyone, everyone is free to discuss them and say anything they want, and Joseph describes this as "imposition of views." It appears that for Joseph, the free circulation of any views that he has not prepared the proper response to ahead of time, is "imposition." This definition of imposition takes the Howard Hughes germ theory to the outer limits.

However, this isn't really the way Joseph's censorship has worked. The LDC reports were different from past practice in that for the first time, the authors refused to allow Joseph to edit them before publication or presentation. Joseph's preferred and consistent method has been to censor all research documents before anyone outside the CC saw them.

For example, Manny's and Jim's speeches at the 1990 conference were edited by Joseph. I would say it is safe to assume that this editing fuzzed up the issues so as to protect icons. At a certain point it became a dysfunctional practice to have Joseph edit all research before it was presented to others to read. This practice played a significant role in slowing the process of questioning, of seeking to get out of the box. (Any document that Joseph did not have time to censor or did not see as useful to hype the trend, was thrown into the black hole, which Joseph now euphemistically calls "unpublished documents.")

Mr. "Free and open discussion" also tried to block the discussion of Manny's report at the congress. He was opposed by a majority of the CC. The section "From multi-polar to ultra-imperialism" in Detroit 22 illus-



trates how busy Joseph has to be in his mission to censor investigation. First, various CC members went off the rails in the direction of "multi-polar world," then they went off in the other extreme of "ultra-imperialism." Christ, until now I thought the dunderheads were only those of us below the CC level plus Ray. Now it turns out that it is everyone besides Joseph. Joseph, has it ever occurred to you that your outlook is a bit...implausible?

The particular problem of Joseph's censorship has been solved by ending close proximity with him organizationally. Now the Chicago-Detroit group must contend with the restrictive culture towards investigation that he will try to impose. He's not our pitbull any more; he's their pitbull.

### Is defending Lenin as an icon a burden on or a tool for study?

What is Joseph's particular ideology in regard to the LDC research? What icons is he defending? His scattershot of smear tactics is the same in his remarks during the 4th congress discussion (p. 9 in the 1-25-94 TS), D 19, and D 22, but it does not reveal what he is defending on the surface. Perhaps there is a clue in the fact that the main target of Joseph's wrath in Jim, while others are more or less guilty of having similar logic on various issues. I suspect that Joseph is not worried so much about the contemporary research per se, but that this business is treading towards criticism of Lenin, especially in the way of linking fundamental views of Lenin with communist views developed in subsequent periods. Jim point blank stated several of Lenin's views that did not hold water in subsequent periods. (p. 18, *ibid.*) This is what provoked the jihad.

Lenin held that colonial monopoly was the most profitable international form and hence a direction of development of world capitalism. He held that ever bigger and more encompassing monopoly economic organization was most profitable and hence a direction of development of economic organization of capitalism. He held that increasing monopoly brought increasing decay and parasitism. He held that these develop-

ments meant a growing dichotomization of society between workers and capitalists plus labor aristocrats, and between imperialist powers and enslaved nations. Corresponding to economic monopoly and in the face of instability, the latter also being generated by the contention for colonial monopoly, imperialism was "reaction all along the line." Between increasing instability and economic monopoly as the organizational form for socialism, imperialism was the final stage of capitalism provoking social revolution—at that time in the form of an alliance between Western workers and oppressed nations. All of these views, in some important ways, were proven wrong by subsequent development.

Colonial monopoly was replaced with a much more accessible world market. Primitive trusts were broken up in favor of greater competition. (The big increase in state capitalism in the 30s—60s later saw some of its forms pared back, and the multinationals of the 50s are now having portions of their form pared into separate contractors.) Decay and parasitism gave way to dynamic growth. The division of labor developed a growing middle class rather than a small labor aristocracy, and colonial regions not only gained independence but some advanced to metropolitan capitalism. Imperialism did not remain reaction all along the line until revolution, but gave rise to unprecedented economic growth and political and cultural transformation of regions.

The full maturation of capitalist relations, in the sense of their predominant replacement of the previous dynastic or primitive societies, did not result in socialism. Both Lenin and Marx believed that it would. The experience of the communist regimes was a revolutionary development of those societies, but not socialist. I would assert that this was not due especially to deficiencies of ideology, but the fact that overall conditions were not sufficient to build socialism. (I doubt this insufficiency can be blamed solely on the agrarian features of those societies, since neither industrial workers nor intellectuals displayed any noticeable distinctions from the general

politics of the Soviet model.) And the particular issue of the WWI era trusts and state monopolies being the organizational form for socialism? These were so parasitical and bankrupt that even the bourgeoisie had to shitcan them.

(History departed from Marxism. The appropriate Stalinist response to this would be to expel history from the "P"arty. And this is precisely what the icon people have done. [1])

Now Joseph has brought out some views of Lenin that, from our perspective today, contradict the above views of Lenin. He saw trends of growth, dynamism, competition, advance of backward regions, advance of state forms, economic and social development, etc. His point is that Lenin therefore could not possibly have held the "cartoon" views above of complete territorial division, apocalyptic decay, etc. The facts are that Lenin held both types of views, though I think it is inaccurate to call the wrong ones cartoons. There were good reasons to develop those assessments at that time. I will digress onto this matter for a minute.

Marx and Lenin only had snapshots of developing capitalism to look at. This limited the power of their analysis. Lenin of course saw more, but not that much more. WWI and the Bolshevik revolution were powerful impetuses to maintain many of the wrong assessments of the paths of development. And the snapshot limitation was made worse by the dearth of information on the dynastic societies (this term I use to refer to the various centralized societies that existed between preclass society and capitalism). They lacked data not only of the future development but also of the past.

Therefore, assessments such as on the dichotomization between workers and capitalists, the growth of state and other monopoly forms of economic organization, of territorial division in the form of colonial monopolies—were quite reasonable in their day. They were a certain extrapolation of trends into the future. [2]

So Lenin was limited by the data available, but the other side is that he grasped profound aspects of devel-

opmental processes. This scientific grasp is what lay behind his correct insights into many aspects of the future directions of capitalist development. Joseph brought out a couple of examples, and there are no doubt many more. Regarding imperialism, the Axis powers in WWII strove for colonial monopoly to the nth degree. And one of the principle predictions that Lenin made in "Imperialism, the highest stage," was that the international development of capitalism would give rise to national movements throughout the colonies. He couldn't have been any more accurate about this.

These two sides of Lenin's views obviously did not appear contradictory at the time. It is only subsequent development that has revealed them as contradictory to us. At any given time, it is not inconsistent to, on the one hand, see different contending factors and forces, and on the other, hypothesize a general resultant vector in the future. Subsequent development may disprove some guesses yet verify some of the tendencies that were seen. The brilliant insight into developments and discoveries hundreds and even thousands of years in the future is common to all great thinkers. In the 4th century B.C., Aristotle discussed the labor theory of value; in the 5th century B.C., Democritus discussed the atom.

I've given the above super-general delineation of Lenin's views as a half-baked framework to make a point. A detailed and actually accurate picture of what they were and what categories they fall into must await a study of Lenin which I have not done at all. Another question is how Lenin's various views related to the subsequent ones of the international communist movement. It was after Lenin that the theoretical stagnation set in. (Hopefully the LDC research will continue to strive to answer more questions than what to write on Lenin's report card. For example, aside from the fantastic ideologies that filled the heads of the participants, what were the real features of development taking place that were manifested in the revolutionary battles between 1917—1975?)

The upshot is that nervous nelly knew full well that the LDC reports were leading quickly to the de-can-

onization of Lenin. He was barely holding his arm in the monolithic hole in the dike, and now an LDC hole was starting to leak. Joseph's temper tantrums over the LDC studies appear noisy. But put in perspective, we should actually congratulate him on his restraint. Given his past hatred of Trotskyism, it is amazing that he could sit through circulation (i.e. imposition) of Manny's article questioning socialism in one country, without blowing a head gasket.

#### fitting facts to theory

Joseph's approach in a nutshell is to fit facts to theory so as to verify it. Such a result is inevitable in any investigation to some degree, since theory must be used to select and interpret facts. But Joseph is extreme in this regard. If he can find something in Lenin that looks like the situation today, then Joseph's work is done. This method doesn't always rule out advance of knowledge—knowledge may be an unintended or unavoidable by-product of seeking to verify a framework. But at best, one is likely to stop short of the investigation that is required, and at worst, censor one's own research and actively disrupt the research process.

So what does the 1-25-94 TS, D 19 + 22 indicate about the approach to investigation? If the study doesn't seem to fit the icons, or might possibly tarnish one, then aggressive action is called for. Such an attitude would never be good, but it is particularly reactionary in a period like today when the old frameworks must be critiqued. The icon ideology both disrupts the process of investigation and maintains blinders against exactly the ideas that need to be found. This doesn't mean that icon people will never turn up useful insights. But they are very unproductive, least likely to contribute, and their writing is laden with so much inscrutable rhetoric that any analysis beyond facts cannot be grasped beyond a very small circle. The critique of icon ideology allows others to more easily separate the wheat, if any, from the chaff, and to utilize it.

**In the contemporary world change is rapid and the merit of ideas**

**in any field is no longer a static "better," let alone "true," but the ability to repeatedly arrive at advanced views faster.** In this environment, the outlooks and methods of verifying traditional formulas lead to confusion at all developments, escalating irrelevance of views, and death as any useful analytical force. In sum: theoretical molasses. The striking appearance of worshiping icons is the visible surface of a desperate attempt to deny the loss of ability to analyze.

Perhaps the Chicago people will like having Joseph stage manage their research so that all conclusions will have proper M-L choreography. I would hope not. The ultra-pluralism afforded by e-mail and local autonomy provides the best conditions for contention of trends and therefore their evolution. There are signs that local work will eventually provide an increasing political and theoretical substance to e-mail. This means that a group the size of Chicago doesn't need the ideological/emotional cripples from Detroit for critical mass.

Joseph has been jettisoned from the middle section of the x-mlp trends. The Chicago group would be best advised to take a lesson from that. They won't be able to subordinate him. On the contrary, they will be sucked into his diabolical schemes to build a mutual admiration society, like the CC was before.

Fred, Seattle

#### notes:

[1] The long procession of social development without socialist revolution constitutes a significant refutation of some of Marx's views. Once the mistaken association of the communist revolutions/anti-colonial struggle with socialism was completely dashed, the full force of theoretical crisis on this issue hit Marxism.

With his historical materialist outlook, Marx saw a close relationship between "objective and subjective" factors in social development. Capitalism seemed to be developing various material conditions for socialism such as an expanding working class in the form of dichotomization of

classes, and this also seemed to be reflected in the subjective realm in such things as trade union organization and socialist parties. But a hundred years later, with objective developments undeniably zillions of times further along, the revolutionary organization was notably weak. What could be said? Well, the objective conditions were over ripe for socialism, but the subjective factors were lagging behind. This view violates Marx's view of close relation of objective and subjective.

Socialists had two choices. They could throw out Marx's view of close objective-subjective development and maintain Marx's view that full capitalism (in the sense of replacement of previous social organization) created the objective conditions for socialism. Or they could throw out Marx's view that full capitalism created conditions for socialism and maintain the historical materialist view. We (mlp) chose the former, which tended to make sense as long as the anti-colonial struggles appeared as somehow linked to socialism.

This view of lagging subjective factor is one ideological framework for voluntarism—organize the class! that's the only thing holding us back. Voluntarism has been a recurrent plague of the Marxist left, not least of all throughout the development of the MLP. Moreover, the "lagging subjective" outlook turns one away from studying the world to try to see what objective and subjective developments are really giving rise to. Instead, one approaches history and development, if at all, to verify icons. I.e., to verify the assumed march of history and therefore the need to make the subjective catch up. I.e., to verify the rationale of the organization's activity. In other words, hype—to inspire and console the faithful.

[2] The point here is not to look for all the social developments that shaped Marxism. But I will mention one general situation that I think pushed millennial and apocalyptic features of it. I suspect those features are reflections in historical science of the general euphoria of scientific ra-

tionalism that was ushered in by the European enlightenment processes. For example, Darwin's discoveries in organic science and Newton's and subsequent physical scientists', gave rise to a euphoria of great comprehension of developmental processes. Compared to Catholicism, there was plenty of grounds for euphoria. It is only very recently that accumulating data in physical and organic sciences is revealing the vast unknown and the errors of the previous "we almost have it figured out" outlook. For example, Stephen J. Gould, Ernst Mayr, Robert Wesson, and others are blowing away the primitive view that natural selection is the predominant agent of organic evolution.

Compared to the serfs and peasants, the 19th and 20th century industrial working class must surely have seemed competent to rule society. But history did not verify this theory. Now the world is being transformed by the information revolution.

from: Fred, Seattle  
3/5/94

## CENSORSHIP, IMPERIALISM AND REVISIONISM

Fred comments on the recent discussion over imperialism in his new article "What can be learned from the bloodbath regarding approaches to investigation, part one" (Seattle #41). You would think that, in discussing views about imperialism, the "bloodbath" would refer to the constant wars of the twentieth century. The hope of tens of millions that World War II would lead to peace has been cruelly disappointed by the reality of an imperialist world order. The hope of tens of millions that the end of the Cold War would lead to peace and prosperity is shriveling as the wars drag on and the soup kitchens proliferate.

But no. For Fred, post-World War II imperialism is a new, improved imperialism. It does not share the parasitism and decay of earlier imperialism. It does not have the tendency towards reaction. In depicting it, he

leaves out the growing split between rich and poor, worker and capitalist, privileged and expendable human beings. You hardly think you live in the same world as Fred when you read the world as described in Seattle #41.

No, the bloodbath Fred refers to is an exchange of theoretical articles.

So, you would think, Fred is really excited about the content of these articles. You would think that he recognizes the importance of comrades discussing the outlines of the present world order. You would look forward to his presenting a detailed picture of what comrades think, and what the world really looks like. My articles Detroit #19 and #22, which he is supposed to be commenting on, raised the issue of ultra-imperialism. What is his opinion about this issue, which is being discussed by comrades in a number of cities? What is his opinion

of multi-polarism, the one-time view of the former CC majority, which they seem to have quietly jettisoned without much discussion? Does he believe that there is a political world order of imperialism or is it just the world market?

Nope. You won't find him discussing that.

For Fred, the important thing is "approaches to investigation". In his view, all our differences would be resolved if we simply agreed on a common approach to investigation. Then we would all agree with him that Lenin was outdated—to be put on the shelf next to Aristotle, to use Fred's comparison. Then we would all agree with him that there is no difference between Marxism and revisionism, and that the anti-revisionist struggle should be jettisoned as "idealist" and the search for "the Holy Grail". Then we would all agree with

him that imperialism is new and improved. As to other issues, we would agree to leave them aside to be resolved in future articles by him and a few other wise people.

He is puffing himself up with a lot of hot air. And there's nothing so dangerous to a hot-air balloon as the sting of criticism. That's why Fred wants to rule criticism out of order as monolithism, censorship, Stalinism, dialectics (!), you name it. He answers opposing views with some references to "icon-people" and "ROOAHs", sneers, a few cries of "Stalinism" to add a bit of flavor, and some lies about the late MLP to add some bulk. After that, he feels safe to dispose of Lenin in a paragraph or two, and to enthuse over modern capitalism.

### **Fred's crusade against the right to criticize**

The full content of Fred's discussion of ultra-imperialism and multi-polarism in Seattle #41 is as follows:

"The section 'From multi-polar to ultra-imperialism' in Detroit 22 illustrates how busy Joseph has to be in his mission to censor investigation. First, various CC members went off the rails in the direction of 'multi-polar world,' then they went off in the other extreme of 'ultra-imperialism.' Christ, until now I thought the dunderheads were only those of us below the CC level plus Ray. Now it turns out that it is everyone besides Joseph. Joseph, has it ever occurred to you that your outlook is a bit...implausible?"

Now, think over that passage. And try to answer the question: does Fred agree with the Boston Communist Study Group (BCSG) that the present world situation is basically ultra-imperialistic (they are looking into whether it is a durable ultra-imperialism or not)? Or does he agree with my polemic against ultra-imperialism? Does he have any opinion about ultra-imperialism at all?

Well, he knows one thing's for sure: whatever my opinion is, it's wrong. And the reason I'm wrong, is that I disagree with the CC majority, as I have disagreed with Fred.

Look over the passage and try to answer the question: what does Fred think about whether "the trend to

multi-polarism" characterizes the world? Does he say anything?

No, the only issue he puts forward is that I'm wrong, and I'm wrong because I disagree with the former CC majority.

Just as Ben denounced "anything which so stunk up the atmosphere and attacks Michael, Jim, Joe and Fred" (Seattle #34, cited in my Detroit #25), Fred regards it as "a bit...implausible" that these worthies might be wrong.

Why, he says, Joseph disagrees with "everyone" on the world situation, and he implies that this disagreement started with my article Detroit #19. It shows the depths of Fred's elitism that he thinks that I am the only one who objects to him and the former CC majority. But very well, suppose I were alone. After all, I didn't take a poll before sending my criticisms of "multi-polarism" and "ultra-imperialism" out on E-mail. Suppose I ended up the sole individual—whether a cranky old man or a courageous pioneer—to criticize the concept of ultra-imperialism. How would that mean my criticism was wrong? Let Fred explain to us what scientific principle allows one to conclude that the individual is necessarily wrong?

So much for Fred's concern for proper methods of investigations. He asks comrades to judge the issue on personalities, on "leadership", on anything but examining the differing views. He's just a petty tyrant upset at criticism, a big balloon afraid of a tiny thorn.

### **For Fred, up is down, and the clash of views is censorship**

No, no, no, Fred shouts. He is not against criticism. He is only against the "censoring" of investigation.

But what is censorship? In Fred's upside down world, it's "censorship" when you disagree with him or with the chosen elite.

The proof? He says that my article, Detroit #19, was censorship.

How was it "censorship" for me to write an article about imperialism for the *Chicago Workers' Voice* (CWV)?

Why, it criticizes certain views of the former CC majority. Isn't that enough? Up is down, day is night, the clash of views is censorship, in Fred's

world.

How was it "censorship" when that very issue of the CWV Theoretical Journal (then called the CWV Theoretical Supplement) also carried the articles of comrades Jim and Manny in full?

How was it "censorship" when the CWV Theoretical Journal, which I support, is dedicated to establishing an open platform for all comrades who want to take part in the discussion?

But Fred gives a very peculiar meaning to the word "censorship"—it means creating an atmosphere in which his views are subject to critical examination.

Earlier, in my article "The right to criticize, factionalism, and social-democracy" (Detroit #25) I pointed out that for Ben and Fred, the issue of democracy had little to do with the right to express one's views. They both grudgingly admit that the MLP comrades had such rights. But such rights are merely "formal" according to Ben. According to both Ben and Fred, the real question is the "atmosphere", the "culture of monolithism". If someone criticizes Ben and Fred or those they seek to ally with, that creates a bad atmosphere, and is therefore monolithism and censorship.

In fact, this can only mean that the "formal" right to criticize must be sacrificed in the name of creating the proper atmosphere.

Thus, in Fred's world, if the CWV Theoretical Journal is open to all sides, it is presumably an instrument of "censorship" and "monolithism". If the Boston-plan journal forbids most criticism or controversy, it is presumably fighting against monolithism. (See the appendix at the end of the article for more on how Fred disguises his fight against criticism.)

### **Imperialism**

But after creating the proper "atmosphere", Fred says something about the world. Not too much, mind you. First, he assures his readers that no one has any real disagreements on the facts of current world development. He actually writes: "it is hilarious that, as Boston 5 shows, Joseph doesn't even disagree with any of the aspects



of trends of development that were noted in the various reports on the less developed countries, so far as anyone knows."

Is Fred for real? Did he bother to read Detroit #19 and #22, which he is supposedly replying to? Fred doesn't give any answer to the question of whether imperialism exists and in what sense; whether ultra-imperialism exists; whether domination and subordination of countries is a major feature of the world, or it is just that all countries are "interdependent"; whether imperialism is progressive as a stage of capitalist development; whether there is an attempt to build a single world order or just a world market, etc. Instead he assures everyone that such questions don't exist "so far as anyone knows". This means that, as far as anyone can tell from his reply, he may not have bothered to read Detroit #19 and #22.

But while he evades those issues, he does go into his two passions: debunking Lenin and picturing a new dynamic, information-era imperialism. He has a paragraph which gives a number of supposed characterizations by Lenin of the old imperialism, and then in subsequent paragraphs contrasts Lenin's supposed views, assertion by assertion, to Fred's view of the new capitalism.

But in this picture of world development in this century, Fred never points to the glaring contradictions of imperialist development. Instead he contrasts oppression in the past to alleged progress today. He can see misery and oppression in the old form, but leaves it aside in his descriptions of the current world.

And he defends reducing Leninism to cartoon-style caricatures.

Let's go through some of his assertions.

### Ultra-colonialism

a) He says that "Lenin held that colonial monopoly was the most profitable international form and hence a direction of development of world capitalism." He replies that "Colonial monopoly was replaced with a much more accessible world market."

Here Fred contrasts past colonialism to, not the present dependent

and poverty-stricken status of much of the world, but "a much more accessible world market." He doesn't even attempt to give an overall picture of the situation facing the independent, but poor countries. He doesn't describe the present gap between rich and poor countries, and their present misery. No, he puts things in the best light by contrasting colonialism to the wonderful market. No wonder he stressed in the past that he has found the Wall Street Journal a more useful paper than the Workers' Advocate (for example, in the Box, part one, Seattle #26).

Nor is it obvious why colonial status should be contrasted to a country's position on the world market, as he does. Puerto Rico is an American colony; and it definitely trades on the world market.

In fact, the world market existed back in the Lenin's time, and even the colonies were part of it. For some countries, it was precisely the whip of colonial domination that forced them more and more onto the world market.

But Fred says the world market is reformed now: it is "more accessible". What does that mean? Simply that the colonies are independent? If it means anything else, the accessibility of the world market depends on how wealthy a country is, and on whether it is seeking to break into monopolized markets. In fact, with the expansion of capitalism in the decolonized world, the gap between rich and poor countries has grown; the gap between different developing countries has grown; and the gap between rich and poor inside these countries has grown. Meanwhile such key goods as technology are monopolized.

But Fred doesn't examine these problems. The only issue he mentions about the market is accessibility. Fred accuses me of "fitting facts to theory". But when the only aspect of the market he looks at is "accessibility", this is chopping the facts down to an absurdity. This narrow viewpoint allows him to simply celebrate world economics following colonialism, rather than making an overall assessment of what replaced colonialism.

Fred also makes a caricature out of Lenin's view on colonialism. He repeats the view of comrade Michael

and Jim that Lenin predicted that the world would develop ultra-colonialization, so to speak. I refuted this in Detroit #19: I showed that comrade Jim had quoted a fragment of a sentence out of context, while Lenin had in fact repeatedly discussed the wave of anti-colonial struggle. Fred's response is to claim that there are "some views of Lenin that, from our perspective today, contradict the above views of Lenin."

You would think that this meant that Lenin said in some places that there would be ultra-colonialization, and elsewhere that there wouldn't. But in fact Fred can't show where Lenin ever said there would be such a complete colonialization. It's simply a bald assertion by Fred that Lenin gave contradictory views on this. Fred says so, isn't that enough for anybody?

Ironically, Fred himself can only point to where Lenin says the opposite. Fred says, referring to a small passage in Ch. IX of "Imperialism", that "one of the principal predictions that Lenin made in 'Imperialism, the highest stage,' was that the international development of capitalism would give rise to national movements throughout the colonies." Actually, Lenin could hardly speak of the actual wave of struggle in "Imperialism", which was written under wartime censorship. But in other works he analyzes the movement repeatedly.

But Fred insists that Lenin gave both views—of ultra-colonialization and of the anti-colonial struggle. Then he says that "these two sides of Lenin's views obviously did not appear contradictory at the time." Why is that, were people stupid back then? If Lenin really did stress that all the semi-colonies would become colonies, and that more and more colonies would be established, and at the same time enthused over the prospects of the revolutionary wave—why wouldn't that have seemed contradictory at the time? But according to Fred, it is "only subsequent development that has revealed them as contradictory to us".

And this is the same argument that Fred uses on one view of Lenin's after another. He claims that Jim, Michael etc. didn't treat Leninism in a cavalier fashion, but simply described

one aspect of Lenin's views, while I described another, contradictory aspect. But, Fred insists, these directly opposed views didn't really seem opposite at the time—a mysterious fog must have enveloped people's minds. Only in our present age of enlightenment have we discovered that these views were contradictory.

### Monopoly

b) Fred says that Lenin "held that ever bigger and more encompassing monopoly economic organization was most profitable and hence a direction of development of economic organization of capitalism." He replies that today there is only the competitive market: "Primitive trusts were broken up in favor of greater competition. (The big increase in state capitalism in the 30s—60s later saw some of its forms pared back, and the multinationals of the 50s are now having portions of their form pared into separate contractors.)"

Once again we see Fred "fitting facts to theory", as he puts it. His discussion of monopolization is a perfect example of closing one's eyes to anything that doesn't fit a preconceived pattern.

First Fred says the monopolies were broken up; I wonder whether even the most enthusiastic trust-buster or free-marketer ever claimed this. In fact, monopoly has gone through a process of development. The "primitive trusts" were replaced by the big orgy of private monopoly in the 20s and 30s. The monopolization of one decade grew into that of the next. And Fred neglects the multinational corporations except to announce that they are now being pared down. He doesn't, however, give any statistics about this or any reason to assume that this slimming down marks a serious change in their market dominance.

Fred's thesis is that monopolies are disintegrating, thus creating a freer and freer market. So he doesn't discuss such embarrassing details as whether a single multinational corporation can be as dominant in its field as an entire cartel of the past. And he doesn't even stop to think whether having a series of contractors dependent on one or a few large

firms is itself a form of monopolization. Nor is his discussion of state capitalism any more balanced.

He doesn't give an overall picture, but simply grabs for any argument to say that "look, monopoly's gone". The old trusts are gone. Er, well, the new trusts that replaced them are gone too. Er, well, the giants of today are becoming leaner and meaner. Er, well, the vast extension of state capitalism has stopped now. One rationalization after another.

Meanwhile Lenin described, not a static monopolization, but an evolution of monopoly over time. Nor did Lenin regard monopolization as simply domination by a single firm. He contrasts markets with a few dozen firms to markets with hundreds or thousands of firms. In the Detroit Marxist-Leninist study group we have started some discussion of the evolution of monopoly, and we will be trying to get a better picture of it in the future. What we have seen so far doesn't go along with Fred's dogma of the free market in which monopoly is only a fading blemish.

### Parasitism and decay

c) Fred says that Lenin "held that increasing monopoly brought increasing decay and parasitism" But, Fred replies, "Decay and parasitism gave way to dynamic growth."

Here Fred comes off like a business-club booster. Oh yes, imperialism was stagnant and had problems in the past, but now it is growing. In order to present growth as a fundamental change in itself, Fred has to present the imperialism of the past as economically stagnant.

Actually, as I pointed out in Detroit #19, Lenin held that overall, capitalism was growing far more rapidly than before. But he stressed the uneven nature of the growth. It's not that he talked of parasitism at one point in the book "Imperialism" and of growth at another, as Fred would have one believe. But in the same passage Lenin showed how both tendencies fit together.

But even as he supposedly investigates parasitism and decay, Fred's description overlooks the sore points of present-day capitalism. Its growth

has led to an expansion of poverty on a world scale. There is a growing gap between rich and poor countries. There is also the decay of whole cities and regions in the industrialized countries. Areas of stagnation and decay coexist with overall growth; the growth of capitalism in the third world coincides with greater and greater inequalities between countries and greater and greater internal inequalities.

In this article, Fred summation of the world economy makes one think of his favorite Wall Street Journal—look at all that growth! Fred ignores the contradictory part of this growth when he is supposedly presenting the overall picture. As always with capitalism, its expansion gives rise to expanding social contrasts around the world. Poverty, and the growth of the strata of expandable people, aren't a mere blemish in a dynamic economy; the main source of poverty today is what results from this capitalist development.

A few days ago the reformist ILO (International Labor Organization) of the UN issued a report. It claims that almost one-third of the world workforce is either unemployed or underemployed (i.e. workers who are poverty stricken). It also pointed to the growth of long-term unemployment in Europe and elsewhere. Is there anyone who is willing to say that all this will just go away by itself with a few more fiber-optic cables?

So it seems that the contrast between the technical progress and this unemployment is characteristic of modern times. It's not that unemployment was zillions of times worse earlier in the century, and things are zillions of times better now.

Fred lays stress on the "information revolution" and, elsewhere, fiber-optic cables, computers, etc. Is technical revolution new to our times? If one looks further into Lenin's views on monopolization in "Imperialism", one finds that he pointed repeatedly to the issue of technical superiority. Monopolization gives the possibility of technical improvements, "the process of technical invention and improvement becomes socialized", etc. Here is the power of technology and knowledge, but instead of Fred's view of "knowledge as capital" replacing other

capital, knowledge is controlled and utilized by private interests. The new technology becomes one of the pillars of monopoly.

Is there any reason to believe that today's new technology will play a different role from that of the past? Hasn't it put up new barriers to the poor countries rather than providing for a democratization of the market? Hasn't it become one of the factors reinforcing the domination of the rich countries over the others? Doesn't it threaten, in its capitalist application, to throw millions of people into the category of the superfluous?

### Class and world dichotomies

d) Fred says that Lenin "held that these developments meant a growing dichotomization of society between workers and capitalists plus labor aristocrats, and between imperialist powers and enslaved nations." But, Fred replies, "The division of labor developed a growing middle class rather than a small labor aristocracy, and colonial regions not only gained independence but some advanced to metropolitan capitalism."

Here again, Fred plays down the contradictions of modern imperialism, rather than investigating them. The colonies are mainly independent, but Fred doesn't discuss what is happening to them as a whole, and to the different classes within them. He simply says that "some advanced to metropolitan capitalism".

But what is notable about today's world is not that a few Asian mini-dragons are getting closer to European levels, but how few countries have made it that far, and how divided the world situation is.

If one were to examine this question seriously, rather than by adjusting facts to the theory, one would have to ask: is the situation of poor countries today easier or harder than it was in the past? What is their position in the world capitalist system? Can one expect all countries to reach the same level, or is the contrast between rich and poor growing?

Fred tries to answer serious questions with one-liners: a few countries have made it. Well, maybe the mini-dragons will make it. But that's like

saying, capitalism is different from the past: a few workers have become executives. Well, they did in the past too. Some former colonies made it to the rank of today's rich and privileged, such as the U.S. and Canada. Japan, an outsider, westernized by itself and eventually made it into the ranks of the industrialized countries. But today, in many ways, it looks like the situation of a subordinate but independent country is worse than it was in the mid-nineteenth century. The question isn't whether a few fortunate countries may join the ranks of the rich, but what is the overall world situation.

As far as the class relations inside a country, Fred also holds that there is a blurring of contradictions. What is the fundamental contradiction of today's society? Fred converts this into the question of "growing dichotomization", which he seems to interpret as whether the percentage of workers in a country is always growing. His answer is that this doesn't exist anymore.

The changes in technology and economy are indeed causing major changes in the structure of the work force and of the working class. This is a time of major, world adjustments in the capitalist economy. And this directly affects the organization of the workers against capitalism.

Nevertheless, on a world scale, the working class has grown to be a far larger percentage of the work force than in Lenin's day; the number of peasants has fallen very sharply in the rich countries and the poor; and the range of class relations has increasingly narrowed towards those typical of completely capitalist societies. The middle sections are increasingly connected to the general capitalist relations of the country.

A modern economy, marked by the exploitation of labor by the rich, also has its middle strata and, as well, its throw-away people. It will never be mathematically only two classes, and it is absurd to think that Marx and Engels believed this. In their descriptions of socialist revolution, there is constant reference to various middle sections—they never thought that society would first eliminate all middle sections and then have a revolution.

The question is whether the split of society into two great camps would proceed far enough to develop a large revolutionary working class, and whether the contradiction between the workers and their exploiters underlie the position of all classes in society.

Present world development is laying the basis for a dramatic deepening of division along modern class lines, at the same time as it is reshuffling the technique of production.

### Reaction

e) Fred writes that imperialism used to be "reaction all along the line", but "imperialism did not remain reaction all along the line" but "gave rise to unprecedented economic growth and political and cultural transformation of regions."

Here Fred waxes enthusiastic about imperialist growth bringing political and cultural transformation. And I don't think he's talking about environmental devastation, the writing off of millions of human beings as superfluous people, and the culture of money-greed when he talks of the "political and cultural transformations". No, it's growth leading to wonderful consequences.

He doesn't even hint at getting an overall picture of what tendencies block the reactionary drive of imperialism. He leaves quite a bit out. He doesn't consider, in his historical contrast, whether the resistance of the working class and the oppressed might have had something to do with the defeat of various reactionary attempts of imperialism. Did revolutionary movements and mass struggles undermine colonialism, help block fascism, and help force cultural and political transformations? Wasn't this a century where the working people shed rivers of blood to ensure that they had some rights. And by doing so, didn't they clear the way for the post-World War II capitalist economic expansion? Nah, in Fred's picture, it's just the new nature of imperialism—say, technology and the information revolution—giving rise to growth and culture.

For Fred, the only experience of the past revolution is that the "indus-

trial working class" was incapable of bringing socialism. In the past, comrades were trying to judge such factors as whether there were the necessary domestic economic prerequisites for socialism in Russia, the effect of the devastation of the working class due to war and economic crisis, and how appropriate were the policies followed by the Bolsheviks. Now Fred just says, it shows the industrial workers weren't capable. But when it comes to the successes in this century in maintaining some popular rights, then Fred forgets about the role of the workers—it's the change in the nature of imperialism.

Fred doesn't even pose the question of getting an overall picture of the conflicting tendencies and class relations in imperialist society, and how they affected the "reaction all along the line" that he recognizes for earlier in this century.

So Fred simply ignores recent and current world tendencies that contradict his view of the new imperialism. In the post-World War II period, when some say the capitalists decided that colonial barriers weren't good for the world market, there were some of the most brutal wars in history against subordinate countries as in Algeria and Indochina. The spread of capitalism through the third world was connected with a number of oppressive regimes. Western imperialism propped up a number of the most notorious dictatorships in the world, while the revisionist bloc followed a model of state tyranny. And post-cold war imperialism continues to show a spectacular level of armaments; continued research and development of new weapons; the development of racist and chauvinist movements, etc.

Fred doesn't draw a balance-sheet of world developments, and look into the underlying causes. He just overlooks reaction and monopoly as things of the past, and enthuses over imperialism's brave new world. Now, if he only could conjure away the world economic slowdown, the rise of right-wing movements in Europe, the threat of rogue atomic bombs, etc....But this would mean conjuring away imperialism itself and taking us right into socialism.

### Is Leninism a burden or a tool?

Fred's discussion of imperialism is part of the section of his article debunking Leninism.

It can be recalled that the BCSG, in Boston #5, took up the question of whether anyone had advocated "that Leninism, and perhaps Marxism are a burden not a tool and that we need to start from scratch to develop class analysis and revolutionary theory, and more". They claimed this is a strawman. It would allegedly "be an extreme statement and distortion even of Fred's most provocative statements."

Well, Fred said fine, and entitled one of the sections of his article "is defending Lenin as an icon a burden on or a tool for study". He answers, yes, it's a burden. But, hey, that's supposedly not denouncing Leninism. After all, the BCSG itself has taken up Fred's religious imagery and said that "turning a theory into an icon is quite different from negating the theory." Perhaps they should consider calling their journal "Fred's figleaf".

So how does Fred describe the real Leninism as opposed to the icon?

It is, in his view, a series of "brilliant guesses" and of "contradictory views." Some of the guesses may turn out right. Of course, if one believes, like Fred, that Lenin speaks out of both sides of his mouth on every issue, then Lenin could hardly fail to be right part of the time, no?

Here it is in Fred's words: "Subsequent development may disprove some guesses yet verify some of the tendencies that were seen. The brilliant insight into developments and discoveries hundreds and even thousands of years in the future is common to all great thinkers. In the 4th century B.C., Aristotle discussed the labor theory of value; in the 5th century B.C., Democritus discussed the atom."

Fred here takes his denial that theories have a framework apart from individual propositions to its logical conclusion. According to him, there is just a series of guesses. Lenin talks about the labor theory of value, and so did Aristotle.

If this is all there is, then Leninism would be of no more use than ancient

Greek philosophy. Surely no one would deny that Aristotle and company are of some interest? Could one say that Fred regards ancient Greek philosophy as a burden on study? Why then, how could he be said to regard Leninism-Aristotleism as such a burden?

Fred, elitist to the core, hints that he isn't denigrating the value of Leninism, oh no. Doesn't he rank Lenin right up there alongside Aristotle and Democritus, as one of the elite? Why, he would probably agree to putting a volume or two of Lenin's in the Harvard Great Books of the World series. Lenin may be a guesser—but a brilliant one! Elite guesses, not your common run-of-the-mill guesses!

Moreover, Fred has departed so far from the materialist view of history that he really believes that Aristotle could have developed the labor theory of value in the 4th century B.C. What Fred is probably referring to is that Marx, in volume I of "Capital", praises Aristotle's insight. And moreover in a section of the book where Marx is discussing value. Well, that's sufficient, isn't it? Marx and Aristotle hand in hand among the elite, why bother to look at what Marx actually said about Aristotle or what Aristotle actually said about value? As it turns, Marx points out that Aristotle lacked "any concept of value", to say nothing of the labor theory of value. Marx praised Aristotle for seeing that the exchange of two commodities implied that there was something equivalent about them. But, he added, that "Aristotle...himself, tells us, what barred the way to his further analysis; it was the absence of any concept of value....Such a thing, in truth, cannot exist, says Aristotle..."

"There was...an important fact which prevented Aristotle from seeing that, to attribute value to commodities, is merely a mode of expressing all labor as equal human labor,....Greek society was founded upon slavery, and had, therefore, for its natural basis, the inequality of men and of their labor powers." (Capital, Volume I, Chapter I, at the end of Section A3, Kerr edition, pp. 68-9; International Publishers, pp. 59-60)

But suppose, for the sake of argument, that Aristotle had developed a "labor theory of value". This would



be interesting. But it is as unlikely to form a basis for modern investigation as Democritus' view of the atom could form a basis for nuclear physics. Democritus couldn't leap nuclear physics over 2,000 years; it had to develop on the basis of a much higher science and technology than that at the time of Democritus. And the labor theory of value required a different economy than existed 2,000 years ago.

Similarly, if Leninism is really nothing but such guesses, it is pretty irrelevant whether they are right. It would just not be a proper basis for revolutionary work. The question is whether Marxism-Leninism provides a scientific and coherent theory of world development and of revolutionary action. And the question is whether the conditions which Marx and Lenin analyzed still have something to do with our current issues. Are we in a basically new situation, "zillions of times" more developed than the past, which has transcended the old class contradictions and struggles of the past? Or has the dazzling technological development embellished and accentuated the basic capitalist framework which came into existence some time ago?

Fred holds that "Marx and Lenin only had snapshots of developing capitalism to look at." Apparently he is saying that there is a basic change to present-day developed capitalism. This change, as we have seen, is that capitalism has supposedly become far more dynamic, has lost its reactionary edge, and the dichotomizations in world society are blurring.

But Fred goes further: "...the snapshot limitation was made worse by the dearth of information on the dynastic societies (this term I use to refer to the various centralized societies that existed between preclass society and capitalism). They lacked data not only of the future development but also of the past."

Clearly anthropology has developed tremendously in the last century. But what has it shown that is relevant to the issue at hand? What views has it challenged? As a true elitist and snob, Fred thinks that simply referring to a field, like the study of ancient societies, or to a great figure of the past, like Aristotle, suffices

to make a point.

But Fred's views raise a question. Suppose we analyze the economy and politics today. Ten years from now, future Fred's will say that we lacked knowledge of future development and that we were just guessing. And they will also say we lacked knowledge of the past, for anthropology and archaeology will continue to make progress. So why bother at all? Why not just wait and let time tell what happens to the great powers, the poor countries, and the class dichotomies? If the simple passage of time suffices to undermine the value of any theoretical work, if there is no general framework that this work is contributing to, then what's the point of it?

#### **Is there a dividing line between revisionism and communism?**

But there's yet another question about Fred's supposed Leninism. For Fred, there is no division between communism and revisionism. Such a division would be a "simple good and evil division at some point or period" (the Box part one, Seattle). He calls it an "idealist view" and the search for a "pure theory" and the "holy grail" and "simple icons". He says there is just "an 1850s Marxism, a 1920s Marxism, etc."

In fact, Fred has denied the value of the concept of revisionism for some time. Here I will just give some additional illustrations of this. He refers in his current article to the debate that has been going on—among Jim, Mark, myself, etc.—as to whether Leninism is responsible for the wrong views on colonialism and neo-colonialism set forward by three-worldism, Maoism, etc. But when he discusses this debate, he describes it as "linking fundamental views of Lenin with communist views developed in subsequent periods". Three-worldism, Maoism, etc. are, in his view, just communism.

Well, what about Stalinism. I don't think he has raised this explicitly yet, but it would follow that Stalinism is, therefore, communism and Marxism. It is simply the communism and Marxism—and presumably the Leninism—of Russia in such-and-such a decade. He can denounce Stalin as a person, but according to his view-

point, Stalin must presumably be just a communist of such-and-such a period.

This should also apply to most of social-democracy. Social-democracy is descended from the communism of much earlier days of the working class movement, and some of it still talks in terms of Marxism. It simply developed into the first or earliest revisionism. If it doesn't make any sense today to distinguish communism from revisionism, why should it have made sense earlier in this century?

Perhaps this has something to do with why Fred, who likes to talk so much about what he calls "black hole" materials, never proposed the printing of any of it in the IB or the Supplement. Most of it is based firmly on the "holy grail" of distinguishing communism from revisionism and social-democracy. Fred has gone way beyond this.

In line with his denial of a division between communism and revisionism, Fred doesn't talk of the revisionist or state-capitalist regimes, but of the "communist regimes". In Seattle #41 he writes that "The experience of the communist regimes was a revolutionary development of those societies, but not socialist. I would assert that this was not due especially to deficiencies of ideology, but the fact that overall conditions were not sufficient to build socialism."

Here Fred confuses the question of whether, say, the Russian communists could have built socialism if their orientation had been better, with an assessment of what the Russian regime began and of what the Russian ruling party became. In Fred's description, there are no tyrannical state-capitalist regimes, but only regimes of "the revolutionary development" of those societies. The only criticism he maintains is that these regimes were not socialist, only communist.

And it is the same with the views set forward by the Revolutionary Socialist Study Group of Seattle in its first pamphlet. (The RSSG of Seattle replaced the MLP, Seattle. A number of copies of a leaflet or mini-pamphlet by them was distributed at the Fifth Congress by Ben. It contained a revised form of Frank's timber article, altered in some ways Frank disagreed

with. Near the end of the article appears the RSSG's view of the "socialist alternative".) In referring to the various regimes that aren't socialist, the RSSG doesn't describe them as revisionist or state-capitalist. Also, despite Fred's charge that others are soft on Stalin, the leaflet does not denounce Stalin or any other revisionist, or any form of revisionism. (The original version of the article, published in the Supplement, denounced the "state capitalist" regimes including that "consolidated under Stalin" and denounced their pretense to be socialist or communist.) It refers instead to the need for a "study of the failures of the Russian and Chinese revolutions to achieve socialism". This even leaves open whether these regimes ever became tyrannies or were "a revolutionary development".

Fred and the RSSG do say that these regimes didn't achieve socialism. But in fact, once one abandons the concept of revisionism, what grounds does one have to say that these regimes weren't socialist? It's utterly illogical. If the regimes can be called communist—the communism of a certain decade and country—then why can't the societies be called socialist—the socialism of a certain decade and country? If distinguishing communism from revisionism means searching for the Holy Grail, why isn't distinguishing socialism from "socialism" (socialism in quotation marks), as the RSSG does, also a search for the Holy Grail? The overwhelmingly majority of those who Fred regards as the communists of a certain decade, believe that state-capitalist economies are socialist. The overwhelming majority of "Marxists" or "socialists" of any recent decade, believe that such societies are socialist. They may distinguish between repulsive or totalitarian or other undesirable forms of "socialism" and the socialism they advocate, but they believe that the USSR (before it dissolved), Cuba, China, Albania (in the old days), etc. are socialist (and maybe even some West European welfare states too). On what basis can one deny their views, if every "Marxism" or "Leninism" is equally legitimate, if it is idealism to distinguish between them and revolutionary Marxism? On

what basis can one preserve the "holy grail", the "icon" of Fred's preferred form of socialism while denouncing the others?

For myself, I am not a communist, a socialist, a Marxist or a Leninist in the sense Fred talks about—that is, simply a member of the communism of this decade. I would regard it as immoral and the worst treachery to the working class to uphold the trend of the state-capitalist tyrannies and of similar oppressors of the working class. I regard drawing a line between communism and revisionism as one of the most fundamental of our tasks, one of the key points of significance of the work of the late MLP and its predecessors. And I regard the erosion of this orientation as one of the main features of the collapse of the MLP and the shattering of its trend.

The MLP and its predecessors supported some of the revisionist regimes and Stalin's regime when it didn't know the truth about these regimes. But this wasn't what characterized us: it was our adherence to revolutionary Marxism-Leninism, with which we cut through one layer after another of the revisionist dead weight that pressed upon us and other activists around the world. Once our research had shown the truth about the various regimes, it is reactionary and absurd to talk about being in the same trend as Stalin or these regimes. Yet Fred says that the MLP was a "Stalinist trend" (Box #1). I think that, if he really believed, after he knew what Stalinism was, that we are a Stalinist trend, then it was immoral to remain in such a party or trend. I don't have the same flexible morality, the same flexible theory of factional maneuvering that seems to have become an epidemic. I think that one should take part in the trend that stands for revolution, for the new society, not the trend of state-capitalist tyranny. I think these aren't the same trends; I am not interested in having some personal flavor of "communist" trend cohabit in a "trend of trends" with these other trends, but in rallying the activists for revolutionary communism and against the anti-working class trends.

In my view, it's anti-revisionist Marxist-Leninism that is needed for the workers' movement. The signifi-

cance of our party was not that it was another reformist group, but more militant than the others. Its significance was its revolutionary work, and its attempt to build an anti-revisionist movement among the working class and to revitalize Marxism-Leninism on the anti-revisionist basis.

To me, words in themselves are not the issue. Whether someone says they're Leninist or not—because Lenin was such a good guesser—is of little importance. If one believes that communism is the same as the state-capitalist regimes, as the three-worlders, as Stalin, etc., then one shouldn't be a communist or a Leninist. Not after one has found out what these regimes were. Only that Marxism, that Leninism, that has a cutting edge against state-capitalist tyranny as well as Western capitalism, is of value; only such a theory is worth defending; only such a theory can guide the cause of the working class.

#### Appendix: More on censorship

As we have seen, Fred declared that my article Detroit #19 was censorship of investigation. Turning logic on its head, Fred declares he is fighting against censorship when he is denouncing me and others for utilizing our right to criticize, discuss issues, put forward their analysis, and express their opinion.

But Fred blows a lot of smoke to prove that maintaining the correct "atmosphere" requires suppressing his critics.

For example, he delves back into history. He tries to show that I suppressed discussion in the past. Of course, even if this were true, it wouldn't justify him suppressing discussion now. However, it's not true. I was the comrade who, when the crisis became evident, wanted the CC to put forward the full extent of it to the MLP membership as a whole, and who suggested that both sides be treated as serious activists. This document of August 1991 is available in Detroit #6. Joe thinks this proposal was "a step backward" (Boston #4), and Ben and Fred spit at it. But search through that document, and try to find the cursing and disregard for others that you find in the work of the

BCSG and Ben and Fred. There is no complaint that the other side is just full of distortions and would agree with me if only it listened. There is no attempt to deny the differences that everyone sees.

But Fred says that I supposedly "tried to block the discussion of Manny's report at the congress." Really? Well, I wrote a letter to Manny before the Fourth Congress expressing my views on some issues of the international situation. Since it disagreed with some of the views Manny eventually put forward, it must, in Fred's view, be an attempt to "block the discussion" of Manny's report. And if Manny had agreed with these views, this would have been "censorship" in Fred's views. I will release that letter soon after I finish working on this article, as part of reference material on the question of ultra-imperialism, and you can then see for yourself what Fred's calls an attempt to block discussion.

### Collective work

In general, Fred describes the fact that the CC worked together to prepare speeches for congresses and conferences and for subsequent publication, as "censorship". Sometimes, especially with articles for publication, several comrades would work at the same speech, article, or other materials. Of course, the Seattle group led by Fred also collectively discusses articles. But I'm not in the Seattle group, so that's good discussion. But I was in the CC and the NEC, so that's bad discussion.

So underneath Fred and Ben's rhetoric, and that of the BCSG too, is a lack of any objective standard to judge the actions of the various sides in the debate. They just paint anything I or the present minority do as sinister, and anything they do as serious and scientific. An objective standard of who is for discussion and who isn't, of who is distorting and who isn't, would raise the issue of who stands for public discussion, who wants the material of both sides to be published, etc.

As far as the collective discussion in the CC versus that in the Seattle group, the only difference I see is that

the CC was more scrupulous to respect the wishes of individual authors and historical accuracy. If something was published in the Supplement and attributed to an individual or to a group, then nothing could be changed unless it was either done by the author or with the author's consent to the change, or unless it was marked as done by someone else. And even slight changes required the speech to be marked as edited for publication. The more differences appeared, the more attention was paid to this, and the less editing was done.

On the other hand, take the revision of Frank's timber article that was done under Fred's direction by the Revolutionary Socialist Study Group (which replaced the Seattle Branch of the MLP). The leaflet consisted of a new version of Frank's timber article; among other things, the end of the article was converted into what was, in effect, the RSSG's declaration of principles. But various changes in this article did not meet with Frank's approval; the RSSG didn't note that the article was revised from the original form in which Frank had made it public in the Supplement. And the RSSG did not discuss with others the differences which arose in their revision of the article or even give a hint of them.

Meanwhile, as far as the CC of the MLP went, the CC members not only had collective work, but also individual expression. The CC members circulated reports as they wished to; could write opinion pieces for the Information Bulletin or Supplement as they wished to; and also set forward their views locally in publications and in party meetings. Nor were these rights restricted to CC members.

What do Fred and Ben have to replace such methods with? Fred has been the leading figure in the Seattle group for some time; and he led its transformation—which he describes, after the fact, in his proposal of April 25, 1993 (see Information Bulletin #81, June 15, 1993). Yet Fred and Ben have been unable to maintain the "trend of trends", where everyone finds a friendly and encouraging atmosphere to develop the most diverse views and all differences are brought forward and discussed. We have already taken a look at the editing of the RSSG's

first leaflet. Now consider what happened in another case of differences in the group. Phil, another comrade in Seattle, expressed his worries about the atmosphere in the group and developments in general in the MLP in his letter of July 15, 1993 (see IB #83, August 22, 1993). What was Ben's response? Ben denounced Phil in his article Seattle #9 (September 15, 1993). He was furious that someone from the Seattle group had criticized it, and he ridiculed Phil bitterly. He also jumped with joy at the thought of discrediting Phil over differences on agitation for gay rights; but he was unable to explain anything to Phil about this and instead just told Phil to go talk to Patrick Buchanan, just as he has now tells me to go to hell. (Ben's Open Letter to the CWV Group, Seattle #40) To my estimation, going to Patrick Buchanan and going to hell are about the same thing.

With this type of atmosphere, it's not surprising that the group split. Perhaps the differences were so deep that, no matter what type of "atmosphere" existed, a split was inevitable or even beneficial. But if so, that too would show the falsity of Fred and Ben's theories. In either case, it's a fraud when Fred and Ben pretend that they have found a way to unite a "trend of trends", to foster differing views, etc.

### Half-baked

But Fred has yet another argument. He says that I was opposed to the "free circulation of any views" because I denounced Jim, Manny and Michael for wanting "to impose the resulting half-baked ideas on the party without even a clear discussion of what was at stake." As usual, Fred turns things on their head. I was not complaining that Jim, Manny and Michael had circulated their ideas, but that they hadn't. My proposal wasn't to ban discussion, but to promote it more widely, to take it public, to have it cover more subjects, and to have comrades write up their views. From IB #62 in 1991; to the proposal of a temporary journal; to my support for the CWV Theoretical Journal, that is the view I have followed with respect to the latest round of differ-

ences. I advocated from before the Fourth Congress that the discussion go from the IB into the Workers' Advocate Supplement; the CC turned it down. I could give more examples.

Meanwhile Fred himself still denounces the CC as having been a "mutual admiration society", presumably indicating that he didn't think the differences had come out. Ben, in his articles Seattle #13 and #39, professes to believe that there are "disagreements [that] have been kept private to the CC" and that this was "an essential component of our dysfunction". But when I say the basic issues behind the differences weren't clear, then suddenly Fred and Ben change their mind. This is suppression, this is censorship, they shout in unison.

In brief, Fred and Ben are engaging in hypocrisy. When they say that differences weren't clear, they claim that this is profound and deep and a sign of their valiant struggle against monolithism and for scientific culture. If I say the differences weren't clear—and worse yet, if I actually do something about this by discussing the differences—it is suppression, Stalinism, censoring investigation, and maybe even "dialectics".

But Fred and Ben can't go too far these days in denouncing those hidden differences in the CC, because they now have something of an alliance with the BCSG and the former CC majority. So, based on the needs of this alliance, they have now discovered that the majority of the CC were really democrats after all. At least for this last period when they were putting forward ideas that Fred and Ben found interesting.

So Fred and Ben have resorted to the devil theory of politics: the problem of the MLP was a single individual, myself, who "stage managed" the whole party apparently (Box #1). This somehow allows Fred to eat some of his words and discover that "everyone (was) free to discuss" the ideas of Jim, Manny and Michael in the past. Oh? What happened to the "culture of monolithism" that Fred and Ben were supposed to be criticizing? Well, Fred has to twist and turn. He now declares that the last year or so was the first time there was freedom of

discussion in the MLP. But apparently the freedom didn't go far enough to fix the overall atmosphere in the MLP, though—probably because not everyone agreed with Jim, Manny and Michael.

Fred has it backwards. Yes, there was freedom in the MLP. But it was hard to discuss the ideas of Jim, Manny and Michael when many critical ones being pondered by these comrades were hardly put forward. How was one supposed to discuss Jim, Manny and Michael's views on imperialism? What documents were they? Reports that are hints and obscure statements? Take Manny's statement that imperialism is an "appearance" of the "essence" that is capitalism. Does that mean that imperialism does or does not exist? Take Jim's statements against the concept of neo-colonialism—are they supposed to apply to imperialism or not?

And when discussion started despite this vagueness, suddenly Fred and Ben and the former CC majority began to oppose this freedom, which Ben calls merely "formal".

So now we have a situation where Fred says there is freedom to discuss the ideas of Jim, Manny and Michael. Except for me of course. My Detroit #19 doesn't fall into that realm of freedom, and he denounces it as censorship.

Except for Mark of course. When he wrote something critical of the former CC majority in the pre-dissolution discussion, Jim, Joe, and Michael mobilized to stamp him down.

Except for the CWV Theoretical Journal. The BCSG denounce the Chicago comrades for saying that differences exist, and want them to stop publishing their journal.

Except. Except. Except. You're free, in the world of the Fred-Boston alliance, so long as you don't exercise that freedom.

#### **How factional maneuvering affects theoretical discussion**

So let's see Fred give a proper example of how to discuss the views of Jim, Manny and Michael. How can one do this correctly, avoiding the methods used by me, Mark, the CWV, etc.

Well, Fred has nothing to say himself about ultra-imperialism or multipolarism, but says instead that:

"Boston 5 lists many of the trends of development noted in Jim's and Manny's reports, and a couple from Michael's. Every one of these observations is important for further study of the LDC issues. They're all important for learning about the 'big picture' that Joseph alleges he would like us to understand."

This is not science, but Fred sucking up to the BCSG, and "every one" of their observations. Mind you, he doesn't discuss what these valuable insights are. Does he care? Apparently not. But they come from Jim and Manny and Michael! Please, please, please, Fred begs the BCSG. Accept my views as in the ballpark—I will kiss your feet in gratitude, I will strike down your critics as icon people and Stalinists, I will absolve you of religious deviations—until the factional balance of strength changes.

Of course, there was a time when Fred was upset with the CC. That's why he sneers at "diabolical schemes to build a mutual admiration society, like the CC was before."

But now Fred sees things he likes in the former CC majority. He thinks that they are moving in the same general direction as he is—time will show how far—and there's good reason for his belief. So now he himself joins the "mutual admiration society." He fawns on them. Why, "every one" of these unnamed "observations is important for further study". Why, they are so important—each and every one—that he doesn't bother to discuss any of them.

When Fred was in the minority, he tried to present himself as the fighter for freedom of discussion, uncovering the views that were suppressed by the horrible CC. But back then, the party existed, and I was secretary of the CC. So Fred had full right to put his views in the IB and the Supplement, and he did so. (And Fred had full right to present any of the unpublished documents he wished for publication; and he didn't present a single one. Not one.)

Now Fred is aligned with the former CC majority. And it turns out that he is fighting to suppress criti-



cism. This is what his fight was for all along. All his words about the "culture of monolithism" and "censorship" are now used by him for the purpose of—denouncing criticism.

### Elitism

This factional maneuvering goes hand in hand with Fred's elitism.

Fred for example ridicules that I am alone in my views critical of the former CC majority and Fred. This is an obvious lie. Even his own article talks of other comrades with similar views, in order to warn them against me.

So what could he mean?

Let's see. In this article, Fred refers back to his past article, the Box, part two. In the Box, he was upset that my articles supposedly incited the "peasants" to riot against him. He wrote off the independent thought and individual convictions of the "peasants". (The BCSG repeat this in more refined fashion, saying that I have "played a role of fueling the

vulgar extremes of the others". Oh, those vulgar commoners—they speak freely and disrespectfully.) Now he has gone a step farther. From his elitist point of view, these comrades don't count. For him, what counts are the elite. The alliance between him and the BCSG count. The "peasants" should simply sit back and applaud the efforts of their betters.

What if you object to the views of the elite?

You will be told you are alone.

If that doesn't stop you, there is another obstacle. Fred waxes indignant that I dare criticize him and the CC majority, when I supposedly didn't do any of the work on imperialism.

In fact, I am the one who pushed the discussion on the single world political system of imperialism; who initiated the current round of discussion of multi-polarism; and who began the polemic against ultra-imperialism. Even the BCSG grudgingly give me a bit of credit for this, although they distort my views in the process. (I guess Boston #5 did, after all, make

at least one observation that Fred doesn't think is valuable.)

But suppose I hadn't been the one to do the spade work on one or two aspects of the controversy on imperialism. So what? Since when has it been a principle of science that you can't criticize something unless you are the one who first thought of it? Or unless you are one who did all the work? What does this mean about the material that will come from the Boston-plan theoretical journal? Comrades are presently being held back from criticism of the ideas of Joe, Michael, Manny and Fred on the grounds that the "serious" work hasn't been done yet. And after the journal is published, will they be told not to criticize because they aren't the ones who did the work?

Down with this elitism—it's time for a plebeian revolt right in our own theoretical discussion!

From: Joseph Green  
March 11, 1994

## An Appeal to Comrades of the xmlp trend

Dear Comrades,

In am directing this appeal to all comrades of our trend but I am also directing it in particular to supporters of the Chicago Workers' Voice Group because these comrades are more closely associated with comrade Joseph.

Eight days ago comrade Joseph wrote a letter in which he replied to my recent letter to comrade Mark. I am requesting that everyone who is not too overwhelmed by their responsibilities, both political and personal, take the time to either read or at least become somewhat familiar with Joseph's letter and the associated series of e-mail exchanges that I have had with comrades Gary and Mark concerning whether agnosticism-about-Lenin is consistent with scientific methods or is consistent with anti-Marxism. I realize that this may take some time and I am aware that comrades have many demands on their time.

What is at stake, in my view, are issues which are central to the development of the unity of our trend.

Unfortunately, I have been unable, to date, to complete my reply to comrade Jo-

seph. Partly this is because he has brought up a number of important issues and it is difficult to treat these issues with all the thoroughness which they deserve in a manner which is concise. I will, with luck, be able to complete my reply within a few days. I hope, when it is complete, that comrades may be able to find the time to read or at least review it briefly.

In the meantime I will state the essential issue concisely:

- 1) Is agnosticism-about-Lenin
  - (a) a scientific attitude and method for dealing with an important scientific question not yet completely resolved  
-- or --
  - (b) anti-Marxism ?
- 2) This is the issue that threatens the unity of our trend.
- 3) Those who equate agnosticism-about-Lenin with anti-Marxism are equating scientific methods of analysis with anti-Marxism.
- 4) Those who equate science with anti-Marxism are:
  - a) attacking our scientific revolutionary

culture

- b) inciting comrades against each other
- c) undermining the development of the unity of our trend

5) Some comrades who are not clear on the real issues are being manipulated with highly misleading arguments and methods which are less than worthy of the magnitude of the tasks which we have set for ourselves.

To these comrades especially I address the following appeal:

Think matters over carefully.

The development of the genuine unity of our trend is at stake.

6) Joseph is objectively defending Mark's attempt to equate *scientific methods* with anti-Marxism.

7) Joseph is utilizing this fraud to undermine our unity.

8) Joseph should be told to go to hell.

# Mark Replies to Ben on Materialism vs. Agnosticism

Ben has attempted to reply to my letter of Jan. 11, 1994. In my letter, I raised that there are those who still deny there were differences of framework within the CC of the MLP. As an example, I pointed out that comrade Michael had raised that he felt Marxism-Leninism was similar to religion and that Leninism had given rise to nationalist-type views among some comrades in Chicago. And in since November 1993, Michael has further identified himself as part of an ideological trend that does not want to defend a Marxist-Leninist framework since this is a trend of those who consider themselves merely "essentially" Marxist and others who presumably don't even consider themselves Marxists in any sense.

Ben considers this to be "intolerance" and "opposition to scientific inquiry". And in his usual tolerant fashion he hurls one non-political putdown after another as if mere huffing and puffing will blow my arguments down.

What has gotten Ben in such a lather? Does he dispute whether my characterization of Michael's views are true or not. No. Does he make any effort to show whether or not I have somehow distorted Michael's views. No. Does he comment one way or the other about whether he agrees with equating Marxism-Leninism with religion or whether Leninism leads to a nationalist perspective for the struggle in the dependent countries? No.

For Ben, the main issue is that I said that disputes over the theoretical framework came up in the inner-party debate. Why this is "filth" cries Ben; it is "insinuation," "bullying" and "intimidation." Then Ben goes on to announce that "the verdict is not yet in on Leninism" and all its supporters are blind religious bigots. Oh, I see. If I raise that the theoretical framework of Marxism-Leninism was an issue in the inner-party debate, it is wrong

because, according to Ben, whether or not Marxism-Leninism is valid is an issue! Brilliant, Ben.

Ben thinks that supporting Marxism-Leninism means being opposed to a serious examination of this theory. This is completely wrong. It may come as a big shock to Ben, but those of us who have not jettisoned this theory have also been looking into the questions of Soviet history and other controversies. I have found that looking into the questions has deepened my understanding of the issues involved in making the transition to socialism. What I have not seen is any good argument that Leninism should be discarded because of what happened after the Bolsheviks took power. Maybe someday such an argument will be put forward. Then I will change my mind.

My attachment to Leninism is not based on sentimentality or the notion that he was infallible. It is based on the fact that for the last 20 years or so, I have found his body of work to be an invaluable guide in trying to build up a trend for proletarian revolution in this country. I still believe in Marxism and I consider Lenin the most consistent defender of the Marxist theory.

Ben has some questions about what happened in 1921 in the Soviet Union. Fine. This is a question the MLP was investigating before it died and I think the investigation should continue. From what Ben has written on the subject, he seems to have no definite answer on whether certain measures supported by Lenin were correct or not. He demands to know whether Lenin was for democracy, but he actually supports measures he thinks were undemocratic. So it is hard to understand what principles he would base his evaluation of Lenin on. Sorry, but a bunch of muddled questions is not much of an argument. Yet on this flimsy basis Ben declares "are we really ready to proclaim to the masses that we are Lenin-

ists?" (see Seattle #33, 1st paragraph under the subhead "Don't do it Tim — it's a trap!")

Then again, it doesn't take much for Ben to discard Marxism-Leninism. Why, he pontificates, the term "was coined under Stalin." What a scientific argument. "Under" Stalin, a phrase was used so it is suspect. Of course, "proletarian revolution" "socialism" and "communism" were also used under Stalin. Hmmm. I knew there was something wrong with these ideas!

Ben goes on to lecture that since "the architects of counter-revolution" talked about Marxism-Leninism, "it seems natural and inevitable that as our knowledge of the roots of revisionism deepened that we would need to take an agnostic attitude towards this framework while we, so to speak, separate protein from poison." Anyone who has been paying attention knows that all sorts of basic Marxist ideas were given lip service by the Soviet leaders until a couple of years ago. And if one forgets there is a difference between revisionist phrasemongering and revolutionary Marxism, it is natural and inevitable that Marxism-Leninism will be casually tossed away.

Ben likes to lecture about scientific methods. Let's "separate protein from poison" he says. And he then proceeds to systematically ignore his own advice. Is Marxism-Leninism valid? Who cares, Stalin used the term. On the question of revolutionary organization, Ben thinks he brings enlightenment by proclaiming the 2nd and 3rd Internationals both failed so we should embark on a new path. Quite a scientific analysis, eh? Really separates the protein and poison! Meanwhile Ben's "new" path, his "trends within trends" ideas actually revives those organizational practices and views of the Second International which were proven bankrupt in practice. It took a "heretic" like Lenin to

break away from the officially approved dogmas of the Second International and develop different, and in my view, superior, methods.

Our dear Mr. Science keeps yapping "what is Marxism-Leninism" and says those who say they are Marxist-Leninist won't even defend the theory. Meanwhile all the basic questions of Marxism-Leninism are being debated right under his nose. For example, Joseph and others have written time and again debunking Fred's views on political economy, organization, "democracy", approach to the masses, etc. from the standpoint of Marxism-Leninism. A debate is under way involving Lenin's theory of imperialism. Indeed, on question after question, the MLP defended Marxism-Leninism against all comers. One could look back over 20 years and argue that the MLP made mistakes or did not fully understand Marxism-Leninism. But I remain convinced that the better we learned to apply this framework, the stronger were our political stands.

But all these debates are of little concern to Ben. For him the real issue is that "the ideological split in the party .... is between religious and scientific methods of thinking and investigation." Ben then gives a brief "history of science" a la Ben. We learn that sometimes old theories are shown to be weak and have to be supplemented or replaced. True enough. And precisely for this reason, we have to carefully examine the arguments being put forward for or against various theories. However, this is what Ben hates about the so-called "religious" trend. They actually present the arguments of their opponents for examination.

Ben says sometimes a theory is outdated but a replacement is not yet ready. But we Marxist-Leninists have not even seen a good argument as to why the old framework is outdated, or "unworkable" as Ben would have it. Oh, I forgot, Stalin uttered the heretical phrase "Marxism-Leninism"!

In Ben science, however, proving

anything doesn't really matter. We learn "the bulk of the useful theories and ideas in most fields is not stuff that is 'proven.'" And "the theories that are 'proven' are only a tiny core, a small fraction of what is useful." And "often the material that is 'proven' is no longer even on the cutting edge of what is useful." Don't take Ben's word for it, he claims this is what Engels argues in *Anti-Duhring*.

**If Ben wants to promote such idiocy as the last word in science he should at least have the decency to claim authorship and leave Engels out of it. In this work, Engels argues against Herr Duhring's notion of eternal moral truths good for all times and conditions. Engels is not arguing that there is little point in verifiable theories or that theories cannot be verified. He is arguing that human knowledge can only approach complete knowledge unless we are talking about the accumulated knowledge of an infinite succession of generations.**

Commenting on human knowledge, Engels remarks: "It is sovereign and unlimited in its disposition, its vocation, its possibilities and its historical goal; it is not sovereign and it is limited in its individual expression and in its realization at each particular moment.

"It is just the same with eternal truths. If mankind ever reached the stage at which it could only work with eternal truths, with conclusions of thought which possess sovereign validity and an unconditional claim to truth, it would then have reached the point where the infinity of the intellectual world, both in its actuality and in its potentiality had been exhausted, and this would mean that the famous miracle of the infinite series which has been counted would have been performed." (see *Anti-Duhring*; ch.9 "Morality and Law, Eternal Truths")

Engels goes on to cite examples even in the "exact" sciences where various theories are incomplete and/or conditional. But contrary to Ben, he does not do so to say that proven

theories are of little value, but to show that proven theories may have limitations but are nonetheless of great value.

For example, he cites how Boyle's law of gases was shown to hold only under certain conditions by Regnault. But because Boyle's law was not an absolute truth under all conditions, was it thereby some useless "proved" theory. No. Engels says that if Regnault had tossed out Boyle's law because it was not "pure truth" "he would have committed an error far greater than the one that was contained in Boyle's law; his grain of truth would have been lost sight of in a sandhill of error; he would have distorted his originally correct conclusion into an error compared with which Boyle's law, along with the little particle of error that clings to it, would have seemed like truth."

It should also be noted that Regnault's additions to Boyle's law were themselves "proven".

If Ben agrees with anyone in *Anti-Duhring* it is not Engels but Duhring. By Duhring's standards of eternal absolute truth, all proven theories are not of much use. Sound familiar?

From: Mark (Detroit)  
Feb. 9, 1994

## Editorial Statement continued

Manny, Jim and Michael on imperialism and the revolution in the dependent countries were the line of the MLP?

We are not against comrades raising their views. We think these are serious issues facing not only activists who were in the MLP but the revolutionary movement as a whole. We think it is important to study and discuss these questions. But the views expressed by Manny, Jim, Michael, Ray, Fred and Joe on various issues are different from what the MLP historically held. And documents written by these comrades were only discussion documents at the time. It is simply untrue to call opposition to these views opposition to the line of the MLP.

But there is another issue. It is implied in their statement that it would be wrong for anyone to criticize the "line". When the MLP existed comrades had the right to criticize a stand, line, tactics, issues of how to agitate and/or individual comrades. While the MLP was alive there was an internal press, the Information Bulletin, the WA Supplement, and communications through a variety of local, regional, and national bodies to raise issues. For example there was a fairly active discussion about the material basis for socialism

At the same time, a large part of the political and theoretical controversies which came up inside the Party were not submitted to critical discussion by the whole party. It seems to us that the Party was not up to the task of sharply delineating the controversies and it underestimated the depth of the crisis. But there were means to carry out such a discussion.

In regards to the debate in 1991-92 over the agitation on the war in the Persian Gulf and other questions, various comrades in Chicago certainly felt that they were duty bound to raise their views. They did so through the Information Bulletin and meetings with comrades. And through other channels. But the Boston comrades seem to imply that any questioning of the "line" is wrong.

Further, now that there is no MLP there are no more party channels for discussing line and stand. Many comrades still think it important to study, discuss and debate the controversial issues which tore the MLP apart. The CWV theoretical journal is addressing that need. It has said that it will be a forum where all comrades can discuss their views. But apparently, now that the MLP no longer exists and the various Party channels for discussions of issues also no longer exist, the Boston comrades want to stop discussion of controversial issues. By fait accompli, they seem to want to determine a line for everyone. To determine a "line" in this fashion was not the way the Party operated when it was alive. Nor was it a right that the Central Committee had when it was in existence. But now the BCSG wants such a right.

Anyway for the Boston group the CWV is just a matter of people in Chicago and presumably of others "'proving' that we were 'right all along'". And they call on those who support the CWV to face up to the hard facts of their similarities and differences. We think this is a good idea. We've called for a debate. But apparently comrades in Boston don't want anyone to face up to the hard facts of their similarities and differences with the views the BCSG wants to defend. This would be "sloganeering and sophistry against imaginary targets." But comrades "what's good for the goose is good for the gander."

### Regarding investigation

There is another straw man. The claim that comrades in Chicago are against investigation. We would not like this debate to degenerate into counting the number of pages of work produced by various comrades. But Boston well knows that Chicago have produced a sizable body of theoretical investigation for the MLP. The fruits of this work were either published in the WAS or given as reports to party meetings or produced as

reports to the central bodies. If they want to say that this was so much less than anyone else or of no value, well then just say it and we will make our case but we have yet to see any specific critiques from our ex-comrades in Boston about this work. So what is your complaint about being against investigation? It boils down to this: you don't like the views expressed by comrades in Chicago and you don't like that these comrades have disagreed with and opposed your views and the views of those you defend! That's the real issue. So please, don't cloud it over with this nonsense.

Further, the BCSG seems to hold that there can not be any debate until further investigation is done and that there can be no debate at our present level of knowledge. This just isn't the scientific method. Natural and social scientists are constantly debating views at their current level of knowledge. Far from stifling investigation, this frequently illuminates the path that future investigations should take.

Furthermore, the issues that face us are not just a matter of further investigation. There are different views on what the investigation already done shows. There are different views as to how investigation should proceed. This too is an issues of debate.

In regards to the issues that the Boston comrades say are under study. We hope that the comrades involved will persist in their study, will be able to work the material up into a form that can be studied and discussed and will be open to having their work discussed, evaluated and debated and will not close their minds off to the views of comrades whom the BCSG has already counted out.

*Chicago Workers' Voice Theoretical Journal* is a forum for science. Investigation, discussion and debate are all part of science. We pledge to carry through our work, to finish publication of theoretical work undertaken by the MLP, to investigate, discuss and debate issues behind and the reasons for the collapse of the MLP. We ask all former MLP members and supporters to join us in this project.



## BCSG Statement continued

countries in order for a small poor country to successfully build socialism. ("A number" is a long way from "all". "A number" implies a major breach in the capitalist world order. "All" implies a rigid and impossible formula.) This is a long way from Chicago's characterization of his view. Manny expressed very similar general views in his report "On the revolutionary struggle in the dependent countries" (See IB 80 page 7.) We agree with these general views. We also do not believe that these assessments violate any principle of Marxism—Leninism unless you take your Leninism from Stalin's polemics with Trotsky and then read even that through Albanian or Chinese lenses.

**c. "That Leninism, and perhaps Marxism are a burden not a tool, and that we need to start from scratch to develop class analysis and revolutionary theory, and more."**

This would be an extreme statement and distortion even of Fred's most provocative statements. But it definitely does not apply even with a very big stretch to anyone else from the former MLP. Perhaps Chicago is referring to Michael's statement that he was concerned that the term "Marxism-Leninism" was coined by the post Lenin leadership in the Soviet Union as part of turning Marx and Lenin's theory into a religion or something akin to religion. But Michael was actually concerned about turning Marxist theory into a dogma, ossifying it and hanging it on the wall. Opposing turning a theory into an icon is quite different from negating the theory. Or perhaps you are referring to Joe's statement that we must take Marxism Leninism, the history of the communist movement and our own history critically but seriously. If you are you grossly misunderstood it. Joe meant that we must start from the Marxist Leninist views and the historical positions of MLP, but that we do not hold Lenin's views or Marx's for that matter beyond question, beyond criticism, but when we believe that the facts call these views into

question we must seriously explain how those views apply in a new way or where those views are wrong and why new views are superior. Were not Lenin and Marx critical of their own views going back repeatedly questioning them and correcting their own errors and one sidedness? (Lenin for example advocated trade union neutrality in *What Is to Be Done?* but after the Stuttgart Congress in "Notes of a Publicist" he says this was wrong.) An attitude that is critical is absolutely essential for scientific analysis.

It is understandable that in the heat of debate people would somewhat distort their opponents views, but the statement of Chicago has gone to extremes. In fact it is not only the Chicago statement which has fallen into this, but also Tim and Gary and Jake in their personal statements have taken things even further. You do not have to deal with people's views seriously. You just distort the hell out of their views, pin a liquidator or social democrat label on them and tell a joke or two and that's it. And this from people who were complaining that Boston is opposed to ideological struggle. It should also be noted that a more sophisticated distortion and exaggeration of others views has been a major feature of Joseph's polemic and has played a role of fueling the vulgar extremes of the others. (We have just received on E-mail Joseph's new polemic in the Chicago journal. It is a marvel of sophistry, subject changing and distortion eg. He takes Manny's statement that imperialism is historically progressive with respect to pre monopoly capitalism in that it better prepares the conditions for socialism and the socialist revolution [ a view which Lenin held too] and shifts it to make it look like Manny was saying that imperialism does not mean reaction all along the line or that it does not tend to decay or that we should not oppose imperialism. He tries to make it look like Manny was arguing like Cunow the German socialist colonialist when in fact Manny specifically warned against such an approach. Joseph responds to Manny's attempt to raise a theoretical discussion with

pages of distortion and demagogy and a ton of quotes from Lenin demolishing a straw man he has created.)

We in Boston have felt it necessary to oppose these distortions which are repeated over again like the big lie, lest people start to believe them out of sheer repetition.

## II

### Some views on the theoretical work

Now on to some views on the questions that need to be answered by our theoretical work. The theoretical investigations of the MLP and the debates preceding its 4th and 5th congresses have brought to the fore a number of theoretical questions that are raised by this juncture in history as well as some questions that have been around for some time and we just realized they were really pressing. The debates have stimulated a certain amount of thinking and in reviewing them the Boston comrades have developed some thoughts on where some of the investigation needs to go.

#### 1. Questions related to imperialism.

a. The debate on colonialism, neocolonialism and territorial division of the world.

A lot of heat was generated on this question between Jim and Manny on one hand and Joseph on the other since the 4th congress. But basically all the participants in this debate agree that the situation in most countries cannot be characterized as either colonial or neo colonial and that a territorial division of the world among the great powers in the sense that you can point to the majority of countries and say that they are under the exclusive or even overwhelming political influence or control of this or that power. There are of course as all agree areas where one power or another has predominant influence. Jim and Manny were writing to oppose painting independent countries as colonies or neo colonies to oppose painting the struggle in most third world countries as a national independence struggle and thus clouding over the class issues with national rhetoric. They wanted to show that countries were

not colonies anymore and that once political independence is achieved there is a change in the nature of the struggle. Joseph objected that these comrades did not deal with the issue of political domination of these countries. Actually they were concerned about that question but only touched on it. Nevertheless there is an important issue here. Not only are people of the less developed countries faced with the bullying by US imperialism such as the invasion of Panama, bombing of Libya or the embargo of Cuba but more frequently local governments impose austerity programs on the masses in response to demands of the IMF or Western banks.

The first three cases are relatively clear-cut. They are clear cut political attacks on the right of the people of these countries to determine their own destiny, to settle accounts with their own rulers in their own way. But the case of debt strangulation is more complicated. It basically it is a case of economic dependency which unlike the demand for political independence is not realizable under capitalism or at least not on any short term basis. At the same time this economic dependency leads in case of debt to leverage of the creditors to demand changes in state policy to the detriment of the toilers, thus undermining sovereignty.

How do we deal with this issue of debt strangulation and austerity programs? From the angle of the proletariat in the rich countries, it is fairly simple we oppose the imposition of austerity programs by our bourgeoisie, we demand cancellation of the debt, we show solidarity with the struggle of the toilers against bearing the burden of this debt. However, the issue is more complicated for the proletariat inside the poor countries. The local governments, large sections of the bourgeoisie and petit bourgeoisie make a big noise about the banks and IMF impinging on the national sovereignty. And that is true. But because the bourgeoisie is tied into the world market it is not going to say to hell with the debt. It has to deal in the world market. Such economic dependence is inevitable under capitalism. Thus the bourgeoisie is going instead to make the masses pay. In

fact a great deal of the debt was run up by the scams and misadventures of the bourgeoisie and ruling cliques. Furthermore the bourgeoisie is driven by the profit motive and the world market to exploit the masses to the bone anyhow regardless of IMF pressures. Does the proletariat in the poor countries want to deal with this question as a question of national sovereignty? Or does it need to deal with the question as matter of fighting against the bleeding of the toilers by the local and international bourgeoisie? How does proletariat deal with the external pressures in a way that cuts against local bourgeoisie and develops class and socialist consciousness. Our understanding of the intricacies of these questions would be greatly advanced by looking at a number of concrete cases of IMF or bank imposed austerity programs and the movements against them.

Another question raised in the debate over territorial division of the world is Joseph's theory that the world imperialist system today would look like ultra imperialism to an observer from Lenin's time. Joseph at the 4th Congress and in his pre 5th Congress polemic raised that the imperialists are jointly exploiting the world on a bourgeois democratic basis among themselves and using such institutions as IMF, World Bank and UN to enforce this exploitation. Although Joseph says that the world system looks like ultra imperialism but is not, the question is begged: have we really entered an era of ultra imperialism. And it is begged not only by Joseph raising the term, but by real life. How do you explain 50 years of peaceful relations among the Western imperialists. How do you explain the relative lack of territorial division among the big powers today? How do we know that this situation is not stable? For this answer we must look at the dynamics.

Of course it is not as though we have no ideas on this. Michael's report to the 4th congress lays out certain elements of the answers. The predominance of US imperialism and its military machine (which had few colonies to speak of coming out of WWII and was eager to break down colonial barriers to make full use of its

economic superiority and thus became a champion for a single world market.) The contention with the Soviet Bloc which held the Western imperialists and a number of third world regimes together in an alliance. The victory of the national liberation movement which broke down the colonial system and made its re-imposition extremely difficult. Within these factors we can see the seeds for turning the current relatively peaceful period of interimperialist relations to more bitter contention. But a closer examination of the Post WWII history is in order to clarify the question further. In addition it is also necessary to get a better understanding of the operation of the IMF, World Bank, G7 etc. to see how they work and if they serve quite the bourgeois democratic institutional role Joseph says they do or are things still settled by direct back room deals of the various governments and central bankers. Articles examining any of these questions in whole or part would be of great help.

Do NAFTA, the European Economic Union and various moves toward regional trade blocs or strengthening existing ones and making them more exclusive represent a beginning of a new territorial division of the world around the big economic powers and also among regional economic and political powers that takes into account the reality of the political independence of the Less developed Countries? Or will this form be stillborn? Articles following these developments would be of great assistance.

Finally there is the question that Michael raised on the relationship of imperialist plunder of the third world to the bribery of the upper strata and to reformism in the working class movement. Here an examination of all the quotes from not only Lenin but Marx and Engels would be in order. Also an examination of the role of profits from third world countries in European or Japanese economies would be helpful. In addition an examination of the history of reformism in the workers movements and the strata attracted to it in a third world country or two would be helpful.

There are of course other questions such as Russia as the interna-

tional wild card, the national movements in the multinational states that deserve attention but we feel less able to put forward ideas on how to go about investigating them.

One last thing is the need for a deeper understanding of Lenin's thinking on the issue of imperialism. Comrades in NY are currently studying Lenin's imperialism as well as the books by Bukarin and Hobson which served as a basis for Lenin's book. A report on this study would be most useful to everyone working on specific issues on this front.

### Questions of Class structure.

At the 4th Congress Joe presented a report based on our local research which raised a number of questions about changes in class structure in the US and other advanced capitalist societies in Europe and Asia.

One of the most troubling issues raised in this report is the growth of the professional/managerial strata. Together these two strata make up 25 per cent of the workforce in the US and slightly lower percentages in Canada, Europe and Japan. This is more people than all the production workers in manufacturing, all the transport workers and all the unskilled and semi skilled manual workers in the service industries such as restaurants, hospitals etc. put together. And the professional/managerial strata are growing faster than any other section of the workforce and have been for decades. Historically we have considered the professional and managerial strata as a petit bourgeois strata a part of a middle stratum in society, different from the small proprietors in that they do not own the means of production, but a middle strata nevertheless. Such an assessment of this strata leads us into contradiction with Marx's view in the Manifesto that society is dividing up into two hostile classes with the classes in between disintegrating. Actually Marx's assessment that the old small producer petit bourgeoisie was disintegrating was correct. But capitalism has developed a new large middle strata based on wage labor, the engineers and professionals and managers who play a middle role for the most part. Marx only made a few comments on this

strata which indicated he saw both its wage labor aspect and its middle force aspect. But it has developed enormously since his time. We must deal with this fact of life. There are factors at work tending to proletarianize sections of this strata while other factors continually raise up new sections closer to the bourgeoisie. We cannot say where things will go without deeper analysis of the forces at work and the various strata within the professional/managerial stratum as well as possibly more social development.

At any rate debate on this issue began in the WAS with Comrade Pete's criticism of the 1991 Seattle May Day speech. Pete objected to what he called the speech's tendency to "wax euphoric about the technical stratum of workers and to discount or underplay the more downtrodden sections of the class." Pete goes on to say, "First of all there is a mistake here in restricting the issue of class divisions to level of pay. Many engineers, accountants, and technicians do not make millions. But they have a conservative outlook, an outlook of quietly serving their masters. They have a privileged position; they know it; and they are uncomfortable with suggestions about changing society. Even if they aren't paid a lot more than some blue collar workers (and it's hard to find an engineer who is not paid quite a lot more than any blue collar worker), they don't have to work like blue collar workers." Thus Pete was putting forward our classical view although some of his criticism may actually apply more to Fred's reply than to the Seattle speech. It would seem from Pete's statement that he regards professionals and technicians as either a part of a separate class from the proletariat or part of separate stratum between the proletariat and bourgeoisie that serves the bourgeoisie or part of the working class that has separated itself off from the lower workers even more so than the aristocracy of skilled laborers and is in more direct collaboration with the bourgeoisie. And that probably covers the range of our traditional characterizations of the professional strata. Since we never really developed our analysis of this strata before, our views were somewhat

amorphous.

In his reply Fred raised the issue of the growing socialization and regimentation of white collar work including of engineers and the narrowing of wage differential with the blue collar workers at Boeing. In a word Fred emphasizes the proletarianization of the white collar workers (Both Fred and Pete use the rather loose terms white collar and blue collar, but the issue of contention is the assessment of the professional workers. Pete would almost certainly agree that the proletarianization of clerical work has gone very far). To Fred the division among white collar workers is between those who manage/appropriate value and those who create it. Fred introduces some confusion here on the relation of value creation and class division, but for Fred the basic division is between managers and the rest. Thus the majority of engineers and professionals are seen as being proletarianized although some more than others. Fred questions whether the mass of unskilled manual workers have a greater sense of class solidarity than the mass of white collar workers which includes at least the lower professionals and technicians, but might concede it. Fred's problem in this is that he actually compares the lower professionals and technicians to aristocratic, chauvinistic skilled workers at Boeing rather than to the lower unskilled workers. In addition Fred does not look into whether or not there is a social basis for the "prejudice against blue collars" that "pervades the white collars". Is this just the result of bourgeois propaganda. Is this the result of rubbing elbows with the managers? Is there something in the nature of their work that brings them into contradiction with the blue collar workers?

No one can deny that the socialization and regimentation of office work and of technical and engineering work greatly facilitate the building of socialism. And the lowering of pay and status of office workers and professionals relative to production workers can facilitate rallying them around a revolutionary core that has nothing to lose but its chains, that is forced to confront the relations between human and human. Proletarianization



of lower sections of engineers and professionals may appear to have gone much further if you look at Boeing where you have such a huge concentration under one employer in one locale. But the vast majority of engineers and professionals in society still work in much more autonomous settings. And a very large section if not the majority play an advisory role if not a semi-management role for the capitalist decision makers. Can we say that the professionals have reached the level of alienation, job insecurity, breakdown of craft idiocy of unskilled and semi-skilled workers? We don't think so. Fred was overly optimistic about the pace of proletarianization of this strata. On the other hand Pete in giving our traditional views did not see that the professional managerial strata has been growing faster than the lower strata and that this is a major problem of our social revolution.

It is our sense that the growth of the professional managerial stratas has been much more rapid than the process of proletarianization and thus this growth has had the objective effect of undermining the lower mass's sense of being a force in society of confidence in its own strength. In addition the rapid growth of these strata has provided opportunities for millions of industrial working class youth to move up and thus stripped the lower mass of many of its potential leaders.

It is doubtful that the professional/managerial strata can keep growing forever without a split and massive proletarianization of its lower sector developing (Of course that tendency already exists within this strata, but it is not near as developed as Fred would seem to believe from his polemic.) But in order to speak intelligently about the problem of this strata we need a better understanding of why it has grown so large, do these factors continue to operate, what is the basis for the political stands of different sections of this strata, what are the factors for proletarianization of this strata? How should we approach it or different sections of this strata?

When Fred stated at the 4th Congress that there has never been a plebian revolution and the proletarian revolution

cannot be one either, he was departing from Marxism. The Marxist conception of the proletarian revolution is a "plebian" one. Fred may have simply wanted to shock and to draw attention to the necessity to win over, draw in, the professional/technical strata that carries the technical knowledge that is necessary to build socialism. In fact given the size of the middle strata today even to begin a revolution a major portion of this strata must be kicked out of its rut and won to the side of the proletariat. But what Fred said wiped out the central, driving and leveling role (in the sense of abolishing privilege, classes, difference between mental and manual labor, or higher and lower [routine] mental labor) of the lower proletarian mass. There is a tendency in Fred's type of statement to promote a view of accommodating the lower mass to the prejudices of the middle strata rather than winning over the middle strata to the goal of the proletarian lower mass. On the other hand much of what was said in opposition to Fred negated the question of the need to deal with the professional/technical strata. Going lower and deeper is essential for preparing the socialist revolution. But that is not all there is. The socialist revolution needs both the "plebian" class instinct and driving force that is so far concentrated in today's lower mass and the technical knowledge that is concentrated in the professional/technical (and managerial) strata. So far this century optimistic assessments of the ease of achieving a correct marriage or any marriage between these two aspects or optimism about the proletarianization of the professional/technical strata have been proven wrong.

We have gone on at some length giving some tentative views on the debate on the professional/technical strata that occurred at the 4th Congress and in WAS only to illustrate some of the complexities of this issue. Our views on many questions may well change as the research progresses.

At any rate we in Boston are carrying out as one of our continuing projects investigating the changes in class structure and an examination of the professional/managerial/techni-

cal strata. At this point we are looking into the history of the views of Marx, Engels, Lenin and the debate in revolutionary and academic circles since Bernstein's time on the assessment of these strata.

We expect to have a report by May. After that we will look further into current literature on the conditions and motion (what little there is) of this strata. It would be very helpful if Seattle comrades would summarize their experience with the engineers and other professionals at Boeing, why they adopted various tactics, what they see as the social basis for both positive and negative tendencies among the engineers and technicians, what makes one section of this strata more radical or susceptible to class/socialist agitation than another, how and why they formed a trade union and so on.

Another issue we are looking into is the transformation into a service economy and the effect this is having on the workers movement. One of the comrades here is working on a history of the struggles and organizing drives of the hospital workers and the various strata thereof. This should also be ready around May. Hospital workers are a large part of the service sector, but they are not even the majority of health care workers. The service sector is much larger and conditions vary widely and most service workers are not concentrated in such large places. Any reports on any section such as cleaning service workers (there are 3 million janitors in the US) hotel workers, auto repair workers, nursing home workers, fast food workers and so forth would also be helpful even if not included in a thorough history.

Another thing we started to look into is the history of the workers strike movement since WWII in the US. One thing we discovered was that since WWII there has been a steady decline in the percentage of the workforce involved in strikes. Even the peak years of the 60's early 70's the participation rate does not reach the level of the early 50's let alone the late 40's. We hypothesized that this is a reflection of the declining weight of the industrial proletariat in US society, the growth of the professional manage-



rial strata and the weaker position and fragmentation of the non industrial proletarians. However we found that the trend was not the same in Canada where the same social transformations have been going on. This leads us to suspect that labor legislation may have played an important role. An examination of the history of US and Canadian labor law may be of considerable help and if anyone in another area can carry out this project and report in the theoretical journal it would be of considerable help.

### The Party.

a. We have been accused of opposing summation of the history of MLP. This is false. We have given our views on this history as much or more than anyone else. Moreover we do not propose cutting off discussion of it. We think that most of those most clamoring for debate on this subject are quite subjective and still stuck in the what Ben calls the germ theory mode of thinking. But we do not deny their right to put forward their views. At this point we feel the proper place for the discussion that is going on is the E-mail. If someone wants to publish that, that is their prerogative. What we are opposed to is printing the current very partial and frequently subjective stuff as any kind of theoretical paper in the journal we are proposing. We do not want to turn our journal into the center for such debate but want it to serve a different purpose.

b. But there is an issue of where we put the MLP in history. There is also an issue of summing up what is generally applicable to the future from our experience. We think that it would be extremely helpful to view our party experience from quite a broad per-

spective so that we can be of most use to a future movement that may be quite different from anything we have experienced so far. To this end we think that an examination of the views of Marx, Engels and Lenin on the party and party building as well as an examination of the experience of the proletariat in building parties from the Chartists to today including the role of small socialist, communist or ML groups such as socialist groups in the US in the 19th century, Quelch's SP in Britain, and MLP in the US, would be most helpful.

When Fred first came out with his views on pluralism, the CC of the MLP was stimulated to broaden its investigation of Bolshevik history. It took a decision look more into what the bolshevik conception of the party was, what it was an evolution from and if it was linked to the revisionist bureaucratic model that followed. One concern was that in repudiating the revisionist model we could fall into social-democratic conceptions and the other was whether there was something in Lenin's views and or in Bolshevik practice (in their best of times and which may not even then corresponded to Lenin's writings) that led to bureaucratic model of Stalin and company.

In light of this our local area was assigned to look into the history of German Social Democratic party, the views of its leaders and especially of the left wing on party concept, relations to the masses, organization etc. Detroit was assigned to look at Marx and Engels views on the proletarian party, organization, relation to the masses, etc. We in Boston wrote up a chronology of the history of German SD and began looking into the views of Kautsky, Rosa Luxembourg, their

debates with Lenin, and Engels views on the problems in the SPD. The work in Detroit didn't get as far. Pete wrote up some brief notes on some reading Marx and Engels but was interrupted by the press of WA work (a symptom of the problems of an overly agitational national press.) Then this whole work was dropped when the debate with Chicago broke out in order to push forward some work on the issues raise by Chicago such as bribery of the American workers and so forth. We found this historical investigation to be extremely helpful in developing a deeper understanding of party building issues and how they are conditioned by historical circumstances. We do not have the forces locally to resume this study at this time. But if some comrades out there have the time and energy to do this it would be a great help. We would be willing to send all our work and references to you and we are putting our chronology of the SPD on the E-mail. We realize that this work is a long-term project but pieces of it could be printed in the journal as they are completed.

We have not put forward views on how to proceed further on the Soviet history questions and socialism questions as we are not so familiar with that front of research. We have also not put forward views on further research on the controversy over socialism in one country.

But we have given our views at length on some of the issues involved in a number of the theoretical questions to give people an idea of the kind of work that can be published in the theoretical journal we are going to produce.

2-5-94

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## Against Sectarianism continued

ama, the bombing of Libya and the embargo of Cuba "are relatively clear-cut. They are clear cut political attacks on the right of the people of these countries to determine their own destiny, to settle accounts with their own rulers in their own way. But the case of debt strangulation is more complicated. It basically is a case of

economic dependency which unlike the demand for political independence is not realizable under capitalism or at least not on any short term basis."

Now, political independence is theoretically realizable under capitalism. For one country to be independent of another does not contradict the basis of capital-

ism. For any particular country, it may be more or less likely that this independence will take place, or take place sooner or later. But this is a matter of judging the particular conditions.

But the same thing is true of debt strangulation. It is theoretically realizable for a country to get out of debt strangulation. It may not be very likely. But it does not contradict the basis of capitalism for

any particular country to become wealthy, or for its debts to be canceled. Some countries do prosper. It may be more or less likely, or more or less unlikely, but this is a matter of judging the particular conditions.

Comrade Manny himself never said a country couldn't get out of debt strangulation. He said that "Abolition of the domination of finance capital, however, can only signify socialist revolution." (p. 41, col. 1) This is undoubtedly true: abolishing the domination of finance capital means overthrowing all present-day capital in the country, both foreign and local (the local capital may well be part of world capital, as Manny points out (p. 40, col. 1)).

But the Boston comrades got confused. Manny's report led them to think in broad and vague generalities. What came across to them was simply the contrast between economics and politics. So they confused a particular chain forged by foreign finance capital with the question of the domination of finance capital in general. But any particular tentacle of finance capital could, theoretically, be cut off.

Well, the Boston comrades leave an escape hatch. They imply that maybe you could eliminate debt strangulation, but not "on a short term basis." But whether it will take a long time or a short time to overcome debt

strangulation depends on the circumstances. The same thing can be said of independence. Although national independence is theoretically achievable, it may, in any particular case, be impossible to achieve "on a short term basis". Adding the phrase "on a short term basis" doesn't help anything here—it still leaves independence and debt strangulation in the same boat theoretically.

Meanwhile, I don't know what was so clear cut about the examples given of invasions and embargoes. Yes, they were political acts—but dealing with them involved a number of complexities. These complexities are hidden by reducing everything to these stale generalities about economics in general and politics in general.

So in trying to help Manny out, the Boston comrades inadvertently showed the problem with his cardboard contrasts of economics and politics. The way they contrast debt strangulation with invasion was theoretically wrong (which they apparently had some suspicion of themselves,

which is why they added the phrase "on a short term basis").

The BCSG statement continued by discussing the question of IMF or bank-imposed austerity programs. But here they didn't introduce any more clarity on the question than before. They talk about whether to deal with IMF pressures "as a question of national sovereignty" or "in a way that cuts against local bourgeoisie and develops class and socialist consciousness." But they didn't go a step beyond anyone else in saying what this means concretely. Indeed they are more categorical than Manny, who suggests that perhaps in one case out of 10 it should be dealt from "a national angle", whatever that means. (p. 42, col. 1) But in those cases too, shouldn't the demands "cut against local bourgeoisie and develop class and socialist consciousness"?

In these discussions, it is notable how narrow the issues become. The agitation against the IMF is discussed independent of the general strategy of the revolution in a particular country. Moreover, the issue of imperialism gets reduced to the example of finding an overall, global pattern for agitation against IMF-dictated austerity programs. I think this is a narrow view of the role of imperialism and its effect on revolutionary tactics. First one needs a picture of the world, and then one will see what the overall struggle in a country is and how the world situation affects it.

### The territorial division

But back to the question of world politics in today's world.

For comrade Jim, the key to the world political order is the territorial division of the world. In the Fourth Congress discussion Jim insisted that the political domination had to be through a territorial division of the world into colonies or areas dominated exclusively, politically and economically, by a single power.

The BCSG can't altogether deny that Jim said this. After all, it's only the main theme of his article in IB #77. So first they admit it, and then they conclude that he left it an open question.

Let's see how they do this conjuring trick.

First they saw that "Jim raised that he does not believe that imperialism operates by a territorial division of the world based on colonies or neo-colonies today."

They then say he "was opposing trying

to force the present world into the 5 point definition of imperialism which Lenin used to describe imperialism in his day" but that Jim stated that the "basic substance of Lenin's analysis was still true". But that's not what Jim said. Jim said that "the heart of his [Lenin's] critique of the nature of monopoly capitalism" remains true. (p. 38, col. 3) The BCSG have made a minor substitution. They have substituted the word "imperialism" for Jim's phrase "monopoly capitalism". That's a big change. Jim had been talking about imperialism, and then pointedly says that the critique of monopoly capitalism remains true.

But there's more to come. Next the Boston comrades gave their own idea of what the basic substance of Lenin's analysis is. That's a reasonable thing to do. But then they go on to conclude that Jim "does not challenge this tendency" that they are describing. And lo and behold, Jim now becomes someone who "leaves open" the question of the territorial division.

Here goes:

The Boston comrades say that "The dynamics of world development behind Lenin's views on territorial division of the world are not that there are colonies and semi-colonies, but that imperialism is not one world monopoly but a number of monopoly bourgeoisies contending with each other that are primarily based in their national states. That these imperialist national states (Great Powers) strive to win political advantage for their bourgeoisie through alliances, through entangling weaker states in agreements which give them special privileges over their competitors, striving to dominate weaker states for maximum privilege and security of interests."

Very well. That's part of the picture, but as we shall see in a moment, it leaves open an assessment of the very question it is supposed to be answering: is there still a territorial division of the world?

The BCSG then say that Jim "simply describes the present situation where the former colonies are independent and [the] interests of the various imperialists roughly balance in most countries. The question is left open."

You see, the BCSG statement shifts from apparently stating that territorial division exists, to saying that there is a rough balance among the imperialists in their influence over most countries. Indeed, a few pages later the BCSG refer to

“the relative lack of territorial division among the big powers today”. So the BCSG actually believe that there isn’t much of a territorial division today. But they do leave the question open—not for today, but for tomorrow. They think that perhaps there might be a territorial division in the future.

They then ascribe their own views to Jim, stating that he leaves the question of the territorial division open.

But territorial division is not such an open question for Jim.

Here are Jim’s statements:

Jim argued that “Colonialism and semi-colonialism has collapsed as a world system. Neo-colonialism, at least as defined over the past 30 or 40 years, has been proved a one-sided and superficial analysis....where does that leave Lenin’s analysis of the colonial and territorial division of the world?” (p. 34, col. 3)

Jim then goes into a lengthy comparison of the world today and yesterday, in order to step by step conclude that the territorial division of the world doesn’t exist anymore. At one point he writes: “In short, the concept of territorial division comes closer to the reality of the Philippines, than to Bangladesh, or Vietnam, or most of the former colonial world. But, that only underscores the outstanding issue that when one speaks of territorial division, one must ask ‘territory of what power’? And, even in the Philippines, that is no longer an easy answer.” (p. 36, col. 3)

He goes on and concludes that:

“This brief survey is admittedly incomplete, yet it should establish the essential point: there is nothing static about the former colonial and semi-colonial world. Much has changed since Lenin’s time. The colonial slaves of his day, or countries he saw as descending into colonial slavery, have emerged into a patchwork of independent capitalist regimes, stronger and weaker, richer and poorer, more and less closely bound up with different imperialist powers. And, in general, even with regard to weaker countries, one does not find the political subordination that would correlate to the territorial division of the globe that Lenin spoke of.” (p. 37, col. 3, emphasis added)

So Jim directly denies the existence of the territorial division; he also directly says that he is denying Lenin’s description of territorial division; and nowhere does he suggest that any other view of

territorial division would be a useful concept. Moreover, he raises the question of political subordination and casts doubt on it too as a useful concept.

And beyond that, at the Fourth Congress discussion, Jim objected to every reference by me to the facts about the political side of the present world order by saying that this wouldn’t suffice to establish the territorial division of the world according to Lenin. For him, the only political side that mattered would be a territorial division with exclusive domination by a single country.

So basically what the BCSG did was redefine the concept of the territorial division of the world to something that leaves open whether a territorial division actually exists. Then they suggest that everyone really agrees on this concept. Essentially, they make it irrelevant whether a division exists or not, thus hoping to encompass everyone, whatever their opinion. However, they do differ with Jim: they leave open whether a territorial division might exist later, while Jim denies outright the value of this concept. Moreover, they slur over the question of what would a territorial division mean—does it require the exclusive possession by a single power that Jim suggests, a concept that didn’t describe the world at any time in this century at all?

I think that the result of their slipping and sliding is a mish-mash that wouldn’t be useful to someone investigating the situation today. Jim’s emphasis on the exclusive possession by a single power is useless for serious work, and they manage to avoid expressing an opinion on it. Meanwhile the BCSG apparently don’t see the point of looking into the role of domination and subordination between countries today, because they believe they already have a picture of this aspect of the present world.

Moreover, their stretching of Lenin’s views on territorial division to encompass anything, even their concept of an essentially ultra-imperialist situation (we shall come to this in a moment), is pretty useless. As far as the question that was raised of Lenin’s views on territorial division and of the situation earlier in this century, I think we need to get a better feel for what was regarded as domination and subordination in those days, and what conclusions were drawn from its existence. This I think would be useful in judging things today, in seeing what relations

between independent countries are essentially the same and what are fundamentally different, and in helping outline what are important factors to look into when doing a study of today’s conditions.

### Is imperialism progressive?

The BCSG are quite upset at the discussion of progressive imperialism in my article.

But the issue of whether, as comrade Manny says, imperialism is progressive “when taken in the sense of a stage of capitalist development”, is an important one. The fight against U.S. imperialism was one of the strongest fronts of the late Party’s work; and it is one of the strongest motivating forces for activists in this country. If imperialism is progressive in some sense, it is something that affects everyone, and everyone will have to be clear on exactly what this means because, among other things, they are going to meet a lot of flak from left activists.

Well, let’s see, Manny argued on the basis that imperialism is finance capital, which is better able to develop the economy than capitalism previously.

I argued that the development of production is not the same as the characterization of the social and political order of imperialism, and that characterizing this order is essential to judging whether imperialism is a progressive stage of capitalism.

Do the BCSG agree or disagree with my argument? They don’t say directly. Presumably they didn’t think it necessary to deal with the theoretical point at stake.

Comrade Ray (Seattle) said at the Fourth Congress that imperialism being progressive in some sense is the ABCs of Marxism. In contrast, in my recent article, I sketched a bit of the past theory of Marxism-Leninism on whether capitalism is progressive. Then I asked whether there was any reason to change the theory.

Do the Boston comrades have any views on my sketch of past Marxist theory on this question. They don’t say. In my article, I say “I’ve only had a chance to start examining some references on how communists of the part approached the question of whether capitalism was progressive.” If the Boston comrades have done more work on the question of when capitalism is regarded as progressive, and can give some analysis, or suggest some

reference, I would be very interested. But they say nothing

Why, they know that Manny's words must be defended, and that's supposed to be enough to satisfy just about anyone.

### Angry evasion

All the Boston comrades say on the theoretical basis of the issue is "He [Joseph] takes Manny's statement that imperialism is historically progressive with respect to pre-monopoly capitalism in that it better prepares the condition for socialism and the socialist revolution (a view which Lenin held too) and shifts it to make it look like Manny was saying that imperialism does not mean reaction all along the line or that it does not tend to decay or that we should not oppose imperialism. He tries to make it look like Manny was arguing like Cunow the German socialist colonialist when in fact Manny specifically warned against such an approach."

Is this all the BCSG think comrades have to know on the issue?

Let's see. The issue raised by Manny's report is whether imperialism is a historically progressive stage of capitalism. Yet the BCSG leave out the question of imperialism as a historical stage. They implicitly identify imperialism as just the economic side of monopoly capitalism.

The BCSG imply Lenin agrees with Manny's characterization. Really? Perhaps the BCSG would care to elaborate on this point and show where Lenin said that imperialism was a progressive stage of capitalism?

But read closely, perhaps the BCSG only mean that Lenin agreed that the increased economic development and the development of monopoly organization prepares the conditions for socialism? In that case, doesn't their statement slur over the theoretical issue at stake, which is precisely whether imperialism can be judged progressive on the basis of economic development?

### A ton of quotes

The BCSG complain that I raised "pages of distortion and demagogy and a ton of quotes from Lenin demolishing a straw man". But oddly enough, it is the BCSG who refer back to supposed agreement with Lenin as their sole argument, while I gave my own views on the subject, summarizing what I thought the past

theory and present reality was.

Moreover, I only gave one quote from Lenin on the subject of whether imperialism is progressive, although it is a lengthy one. One single quote. Apparently the BCSG are going to have to do some research on arithmetic as part of their syllabus. The other Lenin quotes in my article are in a different section of the article, which discusses the characterization of Leninism given at the Fourth Congress, which would seem a logical place to deal with Lenin's actual views.

The one quote from Lenin with respect to progressive imperialism was a thoughtful passage which contrasted the issue of capitalist development with the methods of colonial policy. It pointed out that capitalism could only be overcome through the further development of capitalism, and deduced from this that one shouldn't defend "a single reactionary measure, such as banning trusts, restricting trade, etc." But it also pointed out that "Resistance to colonial policy and international plunder by means of organizing the proletariat, by means of defending freedom for the proletarian struggle, does not retard the development of capitalism, but accelerates it, forcing it to resort to more civilized, technically higher methods of capitalism." (p. 29)

To me, this shows that one can oppose measures that ban further economic development without having to introduce the concept of progressive imperialism. Instead the class relations in the countries involved comes to the fore.

And what have the BCSG contributed to this discussion? So far the BCSG have just shouted that the quotation from Lenin deals with a "straw man". They didn't even tell the reader what the quotation was about.

### Cunow and the BCSG

And aren't the BCSG blowing smoke when they demagogically assure everyone that I presented Manny as supporting imperialist war like Cunow did? (Cunow was a German social-democrat who became a chauvinist, denied the right to self-determination, and supported German victory in World War I.) As a matter of fact, I never referred to Cunow, and never linked him with comrade Manny. It is the BCSG that have rushed to bring up the question of Cunow.

But I did refer to the past debates in the working class movement over whether imperialism was a progressive stage of capitalism. This was relevant to the issue of whether it was just the undoubted ABCs to say that imperialism was a historically progressive stage of capitalist development. And if our comrades are going to say that imperialism is progressive in some sense, they had better be ready to deal with the question of these debates, because now they will be right in the midst of them.

Now, as the BCSG statement implies, Cunow was eventually one of the participants in these debates. If the BCSG know something about the debates with Cunow, and can provide some past literature that shows how Cunow's stand was refuted, it would be interesting. Did the revolutionary socialists of the time really say they agreed with Cunow on progressive imperialism but disagreed with his conclusions? The BCSG say nothing. They raised the issue of Cunow but have nothing of content to say about him. Apparently the Boston comrades raised the name just so they could have a pretext to wax indignant. They hotly retort that Manny warned against Cunow's political conclusions, that is, against supporting imperialist war, denying the right to self-determination, etc. It was, of course, easy for them to find the passage in which Manny warned against these conclusions, because I quoted it in full in my article. I stated:

"Comrade Manny added that 'This does not mean in the least mean that we ought to mute our opposition to predatory wars, look kindly upon the subjugation of nations, or otherwise accommodate ourselves to the reactionary politics that finance capital gives rise to.'" (p. 28, col. 2)

So just exactly who is guilty of "distortions which are repeated over again like the big lie", BCSG comrades? Did I distort Manny's stand—when I reproduced in my article his statement against imperialist war and in favor of the right to self-determination, the very statement that you regard as important and significant? Or do you distort my stand when you accused me of presenting Manny as a supporter of imperialist war like Cunow?

Unlike the Boston comrades, I discussed progressive imperialism as a theoretical issue of interest and importance. Giving Manny's views the serious attention they deserve, I dwelt on the issue of in what sense can capitalism be called progressive. I strongly disagree with



Manny's presentation, but I presented a general theoretical overview which might be of use to anyone who wants to look further into the issue, whether they agree or disagree with my views. And the BCSG have presented nothing on the subject so far but an angry scream.

### Ultra-imperialism

One of the most important new issues raised by the BCSG statement is the issue of ultra-imperialism. It's not just the BCSG comrades who are talking about it; I have heard a bit about discussions in some other areas.

It seems to me that this may become one of the focal points of the discussion on imperialism. It is on the mind of various comrades. And differing views are being considered.

In my article, I polemicized against the idea of ultra-imperialism. The BCSG, on the other hand, state that "real life" itself raises the question, "have we really entered an era of ultra-imperialism". And one of the best things about their statement is that they raise this issue. It brings this issue from the realm of small-group discussions into the open. Whatever else is wrong with their statement, this will perhaps be its historic role, a service they have done for all comrades. I don't agree with what they are saying about ultra-imperialism, but it is a valuable service to pose the issue so that everyone can see it has to be dealt with. Until the BCSG statement, I might denounce the concept of ultra-imperialism in a letter or my recent article, but I never really knew how seriously this issue was coming up. Now all comrades can see that this issue should be pondered, and that what they say on this subject will be of interest to others.

### The origin of the term

But first of all, what is ultra-imperialism anyway?

The term itself was coined by the German one-time Marxist and then reformist Kautsky. In 1914, he advanced the idea of the imperialist powers uniting into ultra-imperialism. He believed that the huge arms budget and other burdens of imperialism would result in the bourgeoisie giving up imperialism and replacing it by peaceful, united ultra-imperialism. However, World War I broke out before his article could be published. But

he wasn't embarrassed; he published it anyway, looking forward to ultra-imperialism in the future.

In his article, he piously suggested in his article that we must struggle as energetically against ultra-imperialism, when it came, as against imperialism. Still he said, ultra-imperialism would at least mean world peace and no arms race.

### From multi-polar to ultra-imperialism

Today the term ultra-imperialism is being resuscitated to refer to the present world situation. It seems to me that some comrades have gone from one extreme to the other. At one time, after the end of the cold war, the concept arose of the multi-polar world, which was debated, and ended up the trend towards a multi-polar world. We had to deal with what the world looked like after the end of the cold war, which eliminated the situation where the world was dominated by two superpowers. As well, although U.S. imperialism was still the world cop and largest military and economic power and predominant overall, it could not rule alone.

But in developing this idea, I think there was a tendency among some comrades to exaggerate the present clashes among the western powers. And too much emphasis was laid on the future prospects of war among the main western powers, rather than getting a closer analysis of the present situation of imperialism as a definite historical phase in itself. Instead of seeking a picture of the general relations of domination and subordination today, and of what the attempt to build a new world order meant, and of its probable evolution and inevitable decline, attention was focused on a stereotyped idea of relations between the great powers. This fit in with, or perhaps was just part of, overlooking the attempt to build a world political system and instead describing it just as the building of a world market. In this situation, sometimes the thought arose that to give a communist critique of the present situation meant predicting the military clashes of the western powers in the future.

This framework has now given rise to an exaggerated view in the other direction. Attention having been focused on future wars among the Western imperialists, it is now focused on the lack of such wars since World War II. There is recog-

inition of the relatively warm and close relations among the western powers at present. But this is being exaggerated; the whole world situation is being characterized in this light; and irrespective of an individual's intentions, this means putting a rosy gloss on a world afflicted by a number of tragedies, and always living on the edge of additional ones. From predicting future wars between the Western powers, the pendulum has swung to asking whether the present phase of relatively close relations will last indefinitely.

One aspect of the world is being exaggerated; the ongoing wars and militarization are being minimized; domination and subordination is being minimized; monopoly is minimized; and the result: the world realm of ultra-imperialism begins to take shape as a concept.

### Rivers of blood

The BCSG write: "How do you explain 50 years of peaceful relations among the Western imperialists? How do we know that this situation is not stable?" And they suggest that more research is needed to know this.

I think it would be more appropriate to ask why the military budgets remain at astronomical levels after the cold war has entered, and why the world arms market is flourishing. It might be more appropriate to examine why the rivers of blood keep flowing around the world,

In my article, I polemicized against the view that there is ultra-imperialism today. As is typical, the BCSG simply ignore these arguments.

Have the last 50 years really been a time of peace? No, they haven't. But the BCSG leave out the incessant war that characterizes this period, and focuses on the peace between the major western powers.

But the major western powers were united into one big bloc facing another. The clash between these two blocs gave rise to an obvious division of the world that was talked about by everyone, and it also helped fuel a number of wars and massacres around the world. The military budgets grew by leaps and bounds. And the world was on the brink of a world nuclear holocaust for decades.

But the clash between these blocs doesn't count either. Only the lack of clash between the Western powers. But why? Isn't this a dogmatic way of examining

the world?

Comrade Manny wrote something in his report that, perhaps, is relevant here. When I heard his report, I couldn't figure out the point of this passage, but now one possible interpretation suggests itself. Manny opposed analogies, and gave the following example: "...in one popular version, the U.S.-led and Soviet-led bloc became analogous to the British and German 'spheres of influence'....But the Soviet Union of the post-war era was distinctly different from World War I Germany; among other things, the one was chronically capital-poor the other decidedly not so."

Is this suggesting that the clash between the two world blocs should not have been regarded as an inter-imperialist clash because the USSR was capital poor? And why should being capital rich or poor be the sole criterion of imperialism? Russia was regarded as imperialist at the time of World War I, and yet it was capital poor.

### Who advocates that it's ultra-imperialism?

In any case, while the BCSG are wondering whether the world today is really ultra-imperialist, they suggest that this is my picture of the world. In fact, I polemicized in my recent article against the view that there is ultra-imperialism today.

How does the BCSG present my views:

They claim that "Joseph raised that we have been going through a period of what might be called ultra imperialism where the imperialists jointly and in bourgeois democratic manner among themselves dominate and exploit the less developed countries, with this exploitation being enforced by certain international imperialist political forms such as IMF, World Bank, G7, UN. (He leaves out the role of US as world policeman although probably by oversight). He also later stated that he thinks that this period of seeming ultra imperialism will come to an end with a fight among the imperialists. But he does not go into the historical development of the current situation or its dynamics."

And later on, the BCSG write: "Although Joseph says that the world system looks like ultra imperialism but is not, the question is begged: have we really entered an era of ultra-imperialism. And it is begged not only by Joseph raising the term, but by real life. How do you explain 50 years of peaceful relations among the

Western imperialists. How do you explain the relative lack of territorial division among the big owners today? How do we know that this situation is not stable?"

So here is typical BCSG accuracy. First they write that I say that we are going through what might be called ultra-imperialism. Then they suggest I said it is "seeming" ultra-imperialism. And finally they admit that I said it isn't ultra-imperialism at all, but only looks like ultra-imperialism. Of course, they never explain in what limited sense I even said it looked like ultra-imperialism. And of course, the BCSG refrain from expressing an opinion on the different arguments I gave to refute the concept of ultra-imperialism. They only give the slogan, and try to attach my name to it, and leave out the analysis.

In response to comrade Jim's challenge to find the political side of imperialism, I pointed to the existence of world agencies, and more generally, of a world political order. Because the CC majority was growing hard of hearing, and because in general it is easy to miss the significance of things which we have grown up seeing, I tried to shake things up a bit by pointing out that these agencies would look like "ultra-imperialism" to someone from earlier in this century. I used the term for this purpose at a time when I thought the CC majority was still defending an exaggerated multi-polarism and when they were denying the world political system. And even then I only said that certain features of the world would "look" like ultra-imperialism to someone from early in the century. It never occurred to me that any comrade might regard ultra-imperialism as an actual possibility for the world situation. Live and learn!

But when I characterized the world system as a whole, I didn't rely on slogans like ultra-imperialism. I pointed to some of the world's concrete features, such as the attempt to build a single world order or a world political system. Here is my description from Detroit #10 of one of the key features of the present day world, in which I put forward the need to deal with the world political system, not just the world market in general::

\*\*\*There is the development of a world political system of imperialism. It tends to be 'multi-polar' in that while the U.S. is still the most powerful country, it cannot rule alone, and moreover other centers of economic and political power

are gaining strength. But in another sense, it is not multi-polar at present. It is now as close as one gets to a relatively united imperialism, peaceful (among the main powers), and seeking to develop a number of world political institutions and to regulate the world market by agreement. It is this system, or 'world order', and not just the world market in general, that has gained or enforced widespread adherence for the time being. (And the rivers of blood being shed around the world are typical of 'peaceful' capitalist periods. It is the big powers who are not fighting among themselves; other wars may continue, and the big powers may also slap down upstarts like Iraq.) The days of fierce multipolar clashes are still to come."

This does talk about relatively united imperialism as a characteristic of the present time. But it doesn't exaggerate it into "ultra-imperialism". Comprehending the world takes a bit of subtlety, a touch of dialectics. There is a difference between describing the present situation and losing one's head over it.

Meanwhile it was comrade Joe, among others, who became interested in ultra-imperialism as an overall characterization. Replying on Dec. 10 to a letter from me, he wrote, among other things, "Will they [trade blocs such as NAFTA and EEC] become the basis for a new territorial division of the world in new post colonial forms in the form of blocs or will they become bases for the bargaining and working out agreements on trade and investment deals between blocs dominated by big powers in an overall ultra imperialist world system of what Thurrow calls managed trade. I tend to think that in the long run the former is more likely."

So here ultra-imperialism is a possibility, although not, in the long run, the most likely one. It seems that since Joe wrote this, the interest in ultra-imperialism has remained or even deepened. The BCSG devote several paragraphs to the issue of whether the present situation, which they apparently regard as essentially ultra-imperialist, is stable or not. Without explicitly mentioning that they are changing their own views, they question their former convictions about the trend to a multipolar world.

Meanwhile, I wrote back to Joe on Dec. 26, and among other things repudiated the term ultra-imperialism.

"(Finally, it's a side point, but I don't agree with the use of the term 'ultra-

imperialism' to refer to the attempt to build a single world system. There are a number of problems with this term, including the fact that there's far too much arming going on now to correspond to the original meaning given this term by Kautsky; the size of the arms market is incredible. This term was invented for reformist purposes by Kautsky, who held in his article on ultra-imperialism that excessive arming was against the interests of imperialism, etc. It has implications about imperialism that are wrong. I don't know why things have to be reduced to this type of slogan. I have said that the system of world agencies would look like 'ultra-imperialism' to someone from the early 20th century, but not that it was ultra-imperialism. There is a distinction. I think that some of the difficulties certain comrades have in analysis come from exaggerating certain particular features of the present; for some comrades, free trade agreements become the end of monopoly; talking of 'ultra-imperialism' involves, I think, exaggeration from a different angle.)"

So comrade Joe of the BCSG was quite aware that I oppose the term ultra-imperialism as a characterization of the world, and even of some of my arguments against this concept. I used the term ultra-imperialism at one point to try to get some comrades to acknowledge the world political system. At this point, the former CC majority still has problems acknowledging the world political system, but it is apparently jettisoning the previous multipolarism without even giving the old concept a decent funeral. Nevertheless the BCSG slyly suggest to comrades that I am the one who describes the world in ultra-imperialist terms. Well, their maneuver may perhaps play a certain useful role—it may encourage closer attention to this issue.

### Bourgeois democracy

It seems that one-sided analysis of the world situation has given rise to the concept of ultra-imperialism. And this difficulty with seeing the domination and subordination in the present world situation may be related to difficulties with understanding oppression in bourgeois-democratic forms. For some comrades, it seems, the end of the colonial system and its replacement with this more bourgeois-democratic system is the end of political domination.

For example, the BCSG also have some difficulties with bourgeois democracy on the world stage. In characterizing my views, they write: "the imperialists jointly and in bourgeois democratic manner among themselves dominate and exploit the less developed countries, with this exploitation being enforced by certain international imperialist political forms..." Actually I was speaking of a system with some bourgeois-democratic features among the world countries as a whole, not just for the big powers. Bourgeois democracy is not a system of wonderful freedom. Its extension to the dominated countries is quite compatible with the major powers continuing to dominate and exploit them. I described it in Detroit #10 as

\*\*\*There is a generally bourgeois-democratic system of domination in relations among countries on the world scale. (This does not exclude tyranny and denial of rights for the people, rather than the governments, of various countries.) The imperialist order makes use of a number of general institutions to obtain world agreements from the governments. As is typical in bourgeois democracy, the richest and strongest rule, and the poor get trampled."

There is no idea here that the features that resemble bourgeois democracy are restricted to the big powers. The little countries vote too. It may not amount to much, but that's bourgeois democracy for you. The big powers may twist the arms of the little powers, invade them when they go too far, or otherwise oppress them, but that too is typical of bourgeois democracy in practice.

But the BCSG apparently have a different idea of bourgeois democracy. They write that "In addition it is also necessary to get a better understanding of the operation of the IMF, World Bank, G7 etc. to see how they work and if they serve quite the bourgeois democratic institutional role Joseph says they do or are things still settled by direct back room deals of the various governments and central bankers."

Since when has the bourgeois democratic institutional role ruled out settling issues by back room deals? May I suggest that the BCSG also investigate whether the U.S. congress has a bourgeois democratic institutional role or whether things are settled behind the scenes through lobbyists, wheeling and dealing, and power politics? Bourgeois democracy may be

progressive compared to tyranny, but it is a dictatorship of the rich and powerful.

In my description of the bourgeois democratic features of the world system, I always was careful to point out the limitations of this concept. In the passage I have quoted above, I pointed out that voting by government does not mean freedom for the peoples. And even among governments, it still means domination by the strong.

But the collapse of colonialism and the growing role of world agencies replaces direct dictate from the metropolis by a more refined system of the dictatorship of the strong. That's all bourgeois democracy is, nothing else. Analyzing the world situation means finding the actual power relationships under the glossy veneer of the talk shops and the marketplace.

(To be continued.)

From: Joseph Green (Detroit)  
February 10, 1994

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## In Defense continued

loud and unclear at the Congress from people I still respect more than any I have ever met. But nonetheless the defense of Marxism-Leninism is the issue of the day, not personal loyalties.

If there is one heritage of the MLP it is that ideological struggle to clarify lines and oppose revisionism is the heart of the Party. That heritage has not died. There still can be no revolution without revolutionary theory. As the world proletariat grows, so does the need for revolution. No bourgeois scholars, and no "essentially Marxist" priests, have ever shown me that Marxism is anything but true.

From: Gary, NJ  
January 1, 1994



# ***In defense of Marxism-Leninism (I)***

What if I had got up at the 5th Congress and said, "The Marxian doctrine is omnipotent because it is true." What would have been the response? I would have heard the term "religion" from one quarter for sure; I would have heard "what do you mean by doctrine? That sounds like orthodoxy"; and certainly I would have heard "how do you know what's true?". I know these would be the responses because I heard all these things there in one form or another. I even heard "I don't know that socialism is possible" believe it or not. (But Joe says arguing solves nothing, so no ideological debate, please! We must go off and study the possibility of socialism before we can support it!)

Suddenly all the gains of humanity, everything that had been learned in 150 years of revolutionary activity, all the struggles of revolutionaries against the Second International, and everything the MLP had accomplished and learned, was being invalidated by half-baked speculations, incomplete (at best) research, philosophical masturbation, and shrugs. Under the weak case of questioning Leninism, Marxism is being attacked.

Mark, Tim, Joseph and others have been accused of being "in a state of denial" for defending the doctrine of Marxism-Leninism and basic party methods. I think the denial of Marxism-Leninism by others is more the issue here.

That initial quote about the Marxian doctrine is Lenin's. Now that might drive some people away faster from Leninism, but hopefully it will begin to put the ideological debate on proper footing. The Marxian doctrine was Lenin's framework. You can read Lenin (Three sources and three component parts of Marxism) to see why. Marxism is not some clever idea some guy came up with, but a continuation of all the philosophical, social, and economic gains of humanity up to then. It is not simply "an analysis of 19th century capitalism" as has been presented by one ex-Party leader. Marxism is the theory of socialist revolu-

tion. It is a complete, integral world outlook, tested in social struggle. You can no more take some parts of Marxism and ignore the rest than you can take one or two legs of a table and expect it to stand.

For example, if the proletariat is not the class to bring about revolutionary change (as has been hinted at), where is the analysis of something else (besides the psycho-babble from Fred). Where is the wealth of society being generated from? Trade? or spontaneous capital generation? as the capitalists' analysis tells us - or is it the theory of surplus value? A lot of us since the sixties, and a lot of serious revolutionaries around the world over the last century, think the theory of surplus value is correct. And if so, how do you throw out the proletariat? If socialism is not possible, why carry on any theoretical work? For what? And based on what outlook and philosophical base?

But the critics of Marxism do not come out with well thought out criticisms or even insights, but instead drop phrases. They pose questions and leave them hanging, and they don't stand up and defend anything. When pressed they slip out the back door with either "these are preliminary views" or "the theoretical work is not finished" or "there are too many questions to answer right now". They call for our basic framework to be researched, always implying major revisions are necessary. Are we to create a new philosophical system this way? Do our revisionists presume that theoretical research will "correct" and supplant the Marxian doctrine? They don't know, you see. They just know that times are tough, so let's cut our losses and run.

Our ideologically-disadvantaged friends however are covering very old ground. Every house-marxist in the world has gone through the same routine. They take some of Marxism and then proceed to make it impotent with "critical" inquiries and amputations. Then, they present an endless list of questions to be answered be-

fore we do anything (most of which Marx and Lenin have already answered - the rest are awaiting us to apply Marxism to solve), leaving students with the prospect of returning to the British Museum to start all over! Well, we went through that in the 60's, and more importantly Marx and Lenin went through it and applied it already. What separated the revolutionaries from the pretenders then and now is the knowledge that the component parts of Marxism are correct - let's proceed to change the world. You cannot proceed from an "essentially Marxist" position - opponents of Marxism have been doing that for 100 years. What are you going to do differently from that position than every revisionist since Bernstein?

The Marxian doctrine is the common framework around which revolutionaries organize. The doctrine is a guide to action to be applied to particular circumstances. Its purpose is to change the world, not simply interpret it. The Marxian doctrine of dialectical and historical materialism, the theory of surplus value and the class struggle are part of the framework on which the MLP was founded. If you are to take a "critical" attitude towards it, or proceed on only an "essentially Marxist" basis, you have changed the basic framework and unity of purpose of the party. Marxism is a critical approach to the real world and all theory, constantly testing it and evolving. That is how Lenin proceeded in advancing Marxism. To say you accept Marxism-Leninism "critically" however is to pick and choose, and from what we've seen, to undermine this very framework of analysis. And people are free to attempt that - but call it what it is and stop hiding.

These critics are attacking Marxism-Leninism. And it is this statement which brings down the fury and wrath of many people upon those who try and bring this out. But they protest too much. It is not "orthodoxy" (as in dogmatism) upon which we rest our defense. But on the basic framework of Marxism-Leninism. If someone



brings up agnosticism, for example, as a possible approach, they are attacking Marxism-Leninism. I'm sorry if that's heavy-handed, but revolutionaries have sorted out these questions already.

At the 5th Congress, not only did I hear on two occasions that agnosticism should be considered as a viable philosophical approach (which in itself could be dismissed as part of the eclectic intellectual swamp we find ourselves in, not anymore significant than other "tentative" or "preliminary" speculations), but the method of agnosticism and its world view were evident throughout the discussions.

It represents the split which exists in the wreckage of the MLP; whether to defend and develop the basic philosophy and method of Marxism-Leninism or to discard it. Now I know that Joe is urging us to put aside analysis of the dissolution, and not to see splits where they don't exist, but tough shit, the real world has its demands.

Agnosticism arose as a philosophical system in the 18th century in an attempt to forge a compromise between the two great philosophical camps - idealism and materialism, especially as materialism was emerging as a potent force against medieval ideas and feudal institutions. The ruling class defenders tried to refute and undermine philosophical materialism with various forms of philosophical idealism. Agnosticism was an attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable. It brought idealism in through the back door of materialist thinking. It is represented by the philosophers Kant and Hume. Opposition to agnosticism was instrumental in developing both Hegelian dialectics and dialectical materialism. To Marx and Engels, agnosticism was a reactionary concession to idealism. Lenin's similar views are clearly spelled out in *Materialism and empirio-criticism*.

In summary, agnosticism says that although knowledge comes from information imparted to us by our senses, we don't know if we are getting accurate data; we can never know the thing-in-itself — there's a real world out there, but we can never grasp it. Briefly, in practical terms agnosticism means

"I don't know"; philosophically it means "I can't know for sure". A thorough refutation of agnosticism can be found in "Socialism: Utopian and scientific" and elsewhere.

Agnosticism by its nature is eclectic because it doesn't root itself in the objective world, but in some limbo between subjectivism and reality, picking and choosing at will, not resting itself on the living history of generations of class struggle and struggle to survive and advance, but on interpretations of perceptions. In short it is the academic intellectuals' nirvana, and their carte blanche.

So it would seem that for a Marxist to let agnosticism gain a foothold is ludicrous. But when the basic framework of the party and of the international communist movement is brought into question by its own leaders than the door is flung open to every bourgeois philosophical trend - including godism and empirio-criticism (as happened in 1908 after the RSDP split). This doesn't mean the framework should be cast in stone. (Making Marxism a dogma, by the way, is the approach taken by one of the comrades advocating rethinking our whole framework because "we can't just go and look up in Lenin what to do anymore"! Since when is that the MLP approach?) But to claim to be Marxist is to embrace the basic principles which include dialectical and historical materialism, the class struggle led by the proletariat, and the theory of surplus value. If some people want to question those principles, then they should go elsewhere and leave the party of the working class (yes, that is what MLP represented) to the Marxist-Leninists.

But, they say, we only questioned some aspects of Lenin's. That is not correct. Phrases have been dropped by comrades which are direct attacks on Marxism itself, as for example agnosticism, questioning the leading role of the proletariat in revolution, that Marxism is just an analysis of 19th century capitalism, and even is socialism possible, and that's just what I've heard. In a period of major setbacks for the revolution world-wide, the reflection inside the party is to attack itself by questioning its existence. Objective conditions were a

contributing factor, but the paralysis was caused by ideological differences which were not handled in a forthright manner. Instead of leading, our leaders have picked up the anti-communist chorus and left the Party directionless.

I think we need to fight the Second International all over again. Many of the positions I have heard from ex-party leaders stink of the yellow international. And they have spread the line deep into the party for two years. We found ourselves defending to seasoned comrades basic principles on the order of a) socialism is good, b) socialism is the aim and historic goal of the working class, c) we need a party... etc., like we were talking to schoolboys again in 1966 on the steps of the library! This couldn't have happened without active undermining of the framework among the party by leading comrades - what has been called by others demoralization. No matter what the objective conditions (which have often been used as a smokescreen) a solid militant central committee would have led the Marxist-Leninists into another stage, a post-party formation if necessary, with the Marxist-Leninist framework intact. Instead the atmosphere of "I have to read 50 books before I can do anything" became the new backbone of the party!. Do we know less now than we did in 1980? I think we know a great deal more.

There are obvious ideological splits in the ex-party. When one or more leading comrades state that they can't support Leninism, that is a split. These splits should have been fought openly - that is the Marxist-Leninist method. They weren't. Thus the anti-Marxist ravings from Fred, at first a crude joke, actually found sympathy in the C. C. it appears. Drift was encouraged, debate stifled (among the members as a whole), objective conditions were thus magnified, even aided. Pessimism and drift were preached to me as long as two years ago. I took it as a personal reflection of tough times which called for tough hearts and minds to overcome. I have come to learn that it was a political line I was hearing. I heard this line

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