

Documents from Iran

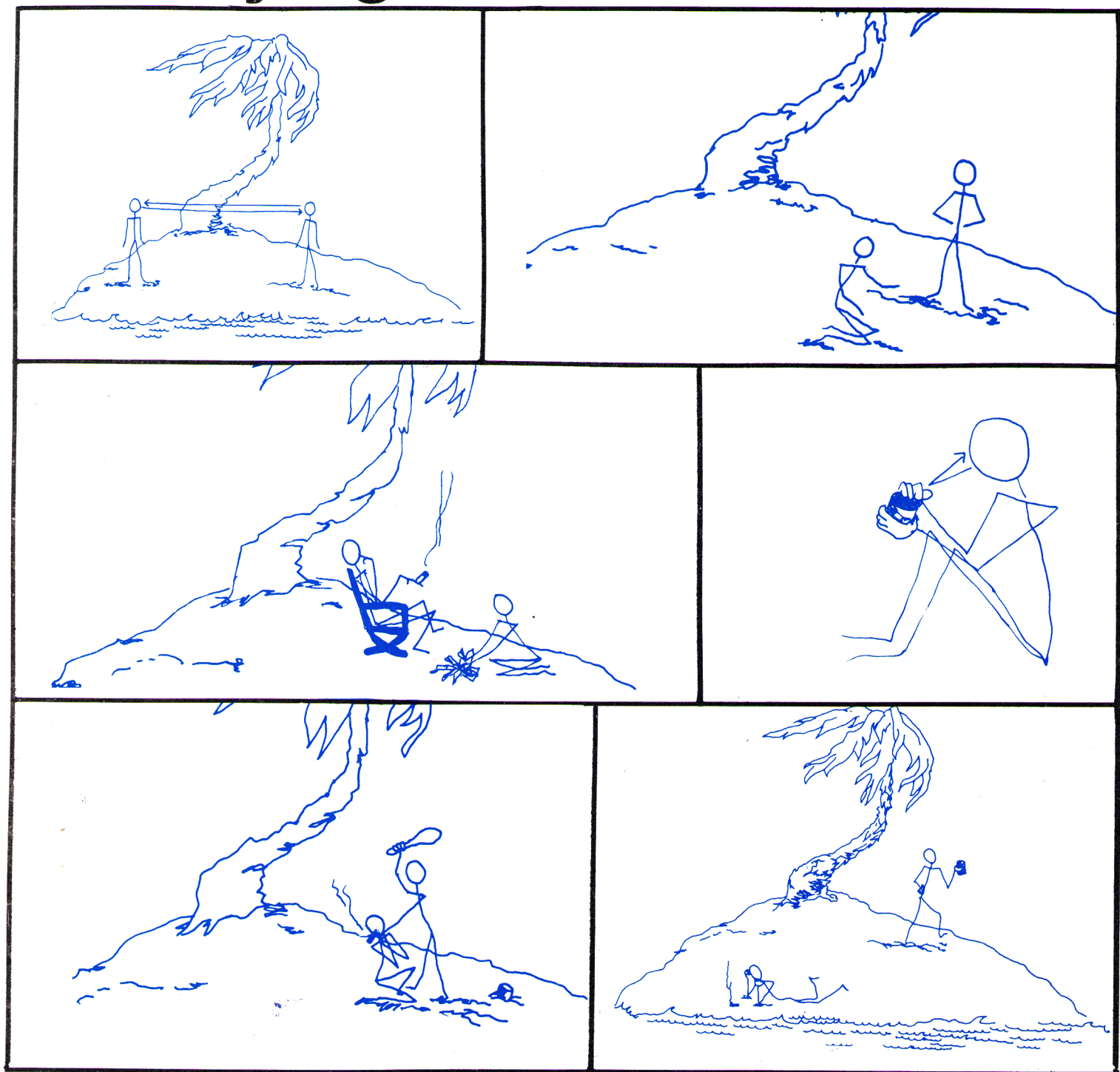
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The Gay movement and revolutionary strategy

Editorial

IN DEFENSE OF IRAN

Iran today faces a revolutionary situation comparable to the one in Russia between February and October 1917.

There is no infallible tactical formula for revolutionaries during such times — political alliances will be determined by the specific dangers or openings as they materialize, just as Bolshevik policy toward the provisional government changed from month to month during the revolution. The principle involved is the political independence of the revolutionary proletariat aiming at the eventual seizure of power, but maintaining full tactical flexibility.

When Kerensky's government was threatened by General Kornilov's counter-revolutionary army, the Bolsheviks demanded and got arms with which they defended the provisional government against the right danger. It was this policy which brought Lenin's party the legitimacy in the eyes of the masses (as well as the guns) which later made possible the overthrow of Kerensky and the completion of the revolution.

We believe the situation in Iran is comparable to Russia during the Kornilov period, and that revolutionaries must rally to the defense of Khomeini's government. The danger posed by the U.S. and its Middle East allies/puppets should not be minimized. Though the likelihood of a direct U.S. military attack seems to have receded for the time being, the undercover destabilization escalates every day.

U.S. meddling in Iranian politics — repeatedly charged by Khomeini and the revolutionary left, and hotly denied by the State Department — is not difficult to demonstrate. The sudden sharp rise of the political and military fortunes of Aya-

tollah Shariat-Madari in Tabriz is the best example. Shariat-Madari, whom Chicago's best-known Zionist, Irv Kupcnet, calls "our kind of ayatollah," is the man who before the revolution stated on behalf of the National Front, "whether or not the Shah remains head of state does not matter to us." [*International Herald Tribune*, May 20-21, 1978] Now, as all of Iran is demanding that the Shah return to face trial, Shariat-Madari says, "We had the shah for 37 years. Who wants him back?" [*Chicago Sun-Times*, December 16, 1979] It is not accidental that this man is being groomed by the U.S. government while the media here promotes him as "the second most important leader in Iran." [John Chancellor, *NEC News*, December 30, 1979] In October, the U.S. resumed the shipment of military spare parts and ammunition to Iran and Iranian army officers are still being trained on U.S. military bases — reminiscent of the U.S. maneuvers in Chile during the Allende years, laying the groundwork for a military coup.

Our general stance does not mean supporting Khomeini's government uncritically or unconditionally; STO supports the armed revolutionary left.

There are many reactionary tendencies which must be combated by the revolutionary left. The constitution as adopted, for example, made vast concessions to the right, as against the original draft. The oppressive policy toward minority nationalities has opened the door to reactionary intrigue.

(In the past, the Kurdish movement under Barzani's leadership was used by the Shah, the CIA, and the Israeli government to at-

tack the Baathist government of Iraq. No doubt the CIA would like to repeat and improve on this scenario, using the national movements' grievances as a pretext to weaken Khomeini and bring on a civil war which would justify a military coup.) The forces presently fighting for autonomy in Kurdistan have purged the remnants of Barzani's forces and have made opposition to U.S. imperialism a clear part of their program. These forces are: the Kurdish Democratic Party; the Party of the Toiling Masses, led by a religious leader, Hosseini; and fedayee guerrillas.

The continued fighting in Kurdistan has had two results for Khomeini's regime: it has hurt him in that it has exposed the brutality of his Revolutionary Guards, and it has been helpful to him in that it has sustained an atmosphere of jingoism and Persian national unity. At present, peace negotiations have been proposed and have bogged down over the Kurdish forces' insistence that the fedayee guerrillas be included in the negotiations, and the government's refusal to meet with them.

The Khomeini government has attempted to repress the left, but so far the attempts have ended in failure. The newspaper of the Organization of Iranian People's Fedayee Guerrillas (OIPFG), *Kar* (Labor), was shut down last summer by the government. Within a few months it was available again — not openly on all the newsstands, but nevertheless readily available at the universities and some workplaces. Subscribers in the U.S. now receive it regularly.

The Marxist left was able to function openly until last summer and is again functioning openly at

the time of this writing. The Revolutionary Guards did attack the offices of the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (OMPI) and the OIPFG: the OMPI placed an armed guard around its office and succeeded in defending it, and while the OIPFG headquarters were indeed burned, that did not hold back their growth and influence. The OIPFG and the Workers Syndicates jointly sponsored a Mayday demonstration which attracted 500,000 people. During the last few weeks, huge crowds have marched openly in Tehran under the banners of the OIPFG and OMPI in support of the occupation of the U.S. embassy. A few Trotskyists have been jailed, but the government has been forced to cancel scheduled executions.

Despite these right-wing currents there is a progressive side to the Islamic revival that is sweeping the Middle East which much of the U.S. left has failed to understand and appreciate — largely due to its

knee-jerk anti-clericalism. Islam represents a third force in the region, one which is opposed to the interests of both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. It would not have been able to make the gains which it has made if it were wholly reactionary and anachronistic. Obviously it is inadequate to the broader revolutionary current and obviously it imposes fetters on those very forces which it releases — the clearest examples are the repression of women and homosexuals and sexuality in general. But the left brings no credit on itself for its failure to understand what is positive in this Islamic movement and what is the basis of its appeal.

It is within this framework — not outside it — that the boldest revolutionary thrust to date has taken place: the students' seizure of the U.S. embassy, which is in its ninth week as we write. By taking the embassy, the students let loose the storm which was held back the February before. Very quickly two

governments fell: first the Bazar-gan/Yazdi regime which was presumed to be secretly pro-U.S. (Ibrahim Yazdi's secret meeting with Zbigniew Brzezinski led many to conclude that he was the CIA's main conduit in the Iranian inner circle); then the "moderate" government of Abol-Hassan Bani-Sadr. Now Khomeini's longtime loyalist, Sadegh Ghotbzadeh, is feeling the heat.

Thus far Khomeini himself has embraced the revolutionary fervor, and his public statements have all supported the students. Throughout the Middle East and Africa — from Palestine and Eritrea to Western Sahara and South Africa — revolutionary anti-imperialist movements have cabled their support, stressing the grave threat posed by the U.S. The revolutionary left in this country should not hesitate to join the chorus.

January 5, 1980

Documents of the Iranian Revolutionary Movement

Below we reprint documents from three of the armed revolutionary movements in Iran.

Excerpt from "On the Revolution," translated from Kar (Labor), newspaper of the Organization of Iranian People's Fedayee Guerillas, December 1979.

All of these forces -- workers, peasants, students, craftsmen, merchants, and soldiers — rose up roaring the slogans of "death to the Shah" and "death to imperialism." There was a common cause and each was determined to remedy the existing situation in favor of their own socio-economic interests. But what were the results? Due to

the lack of a revolutionary nationwide organization of the working class, it was the clergy who benefited most from the opportunity for agitation and propaganda by its large-scale and direct contact with the masses through its traditional religious organization. Thus, using the popular cry of "death to the Shah," they were able to direct the revolutionary movement and mobilize the masses under their own leadership.

The clergy, relying on the masses' religious beliefs and their hatred of the Shah, and on the upheaval created by an economic and political crisis, raised the motto of "Islamic Republic" as the only cure for the people's problems. How-

ever, "the Islamic Republic," which the narrow-minded clergy is striving for, is the canonic rule of a Moslem clergy leadership. This has been crystallized in the recent Constitution passed by the "Experts Assembly." This Islamic rule is in contradiction to imperialist domination; it is also in contradiction to the existing objective realities of Iranian society.

The liberal Bourgeoisie, who had been prevented by the Shah's dictatorship from developing its social interests — namely, the exploitation of the people — to its fullest potential, had asked for some reforms from his so-called Majesty. Immediately after the movement became widespread, the liberal Bourgeoisie

After the Shah, it is the U.S. government's turn.

tried to interpret the motto of "Islamic Republic" according to its own viewpoint and interests. For some time they made an effort to intimidate the Shah with the threat of a mass "outburst," and thus gain some privileges for themselves. However, in the midst of mass uprisings, when the Shah's destiny became clear, they tried to take advantage of the narrow-minded clergy's fear of the Communist movement of Iran, and to represent themselves as the experts to bring about the Islamic Republic, and thus take possession of power.

The liberal Bourgeoisie was fearful of the scale of the revolutionary movement and since they themselves could not bring it under their control, they decided the best way would be for them to act and appear religious and use every opportunity to put themselves into power. The liberal Bourgeoisie, relying on their methods of manipulation, have sought and are seeking to continue their reconciliatory policy, which is aimed at the revival of the previous constitution without the monarchy. This, in turn, would be basic imperialist dependent capitalism. They are the ones who for many years have advised Imperialism that the Shah should be a king and not a tyrant.

At this stage the narrow-minded clergy have adopted a policy of seeking to limit the influence of the liberal Bourgeoisie on governmental policies in order to compensate for their own shortcomings and to prevent their declining popular support.

Meanwhile the unexpected meeting of ex-prime minister Bazargan, as the representative of the liberal Bourgeoisie, with Brzezinski, and the ongoing compromise between the U.S. government and the Iran-

ian ministry of foreign affairs regarding the admittance of the ex-Shah to the United States, has resulted in the intensification of popular protest against the U.S. government. In the midst of this new movement, during one of the demonstrations in front of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran, a group of anti-imperialist students took over the Embassy Compound and demanded the extradition of the criminal Shah of Iran.

The various moves of the U.S. government are now the main topic of discussion on any street corner in Iran. Wherever there is a discussion, people talk about the takeover of the U.S. Embassy and the necessity of a deeper popular struggle against the economic, political, military, and cultural domination of imperialism. Our people have understood well their revolutionary tasks, from the days of the February uprising until now, and have crystallized it in the slogan, "After the Shah, it is the U.S. Government's turn."

Participation in this struggle is not limited to this or that method or tactic. The struggle should be organized in all possible and available channels. Social consciousness should be deepened. People should be organized. They should be prepared for a long-term bloody struggle against imperialism and its lackeys, if necessary. It should be well understood that only those who rely on their labor power have the full potential to drive the revolutionary popular march of the toiling masses to the very end of its victorious goal.

We should well understand that some reactionary and dependent capitalist tendencies will do their best to exploit the revolutionary anti-imperialist and democratic struggle of the people. While the

takeover of the U.S. Embassy is in itself an anti-imperialist act, this struggle should be deepened and intensified to the just demand of ousting all imperialist elements from Iran and putting an end to their domination. On the other hand, now that the U.S. Government has been damaged, it sees the foregoing events in opposition to its interests.

If the ever-deepening process of popular anti-imperialist struggle continues — a struggle which inherently demands a complete end to the economic, political, military, and cultural imperialist domination — this will not be tolerated by the U.S. Government. More economic, political and even military pressures of the U.S. Government against the Iranian people are expected. If so, then it is only popular power and international solidarity which can resist to the end and defeat imperialist invasion. Those who disregard or distort the sharp direction of the struggle against the main enemy, namely U.S. Imperialism and its dependent capitalist class in Iran, are not serving the immediate and basic interests of the Iranian people.

Excerpts from a speech by Masoud Rajavy of the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (OMPI) on May 25, 1979, a national day of protest against American Imperialism, in commemoration of the martyred Mojahedin founders.

In today's gathering there is a delicate point which is full of depth and meaning, and that meaning is the fact that whether it be our gathering, or the other gatherings throughout the nation, one thing is absolutely clear and that is when we are moving on the right path or when we put our finger on the right point we all stand united. In this point I mean the path or line of anti-imperialism or anti-colonialism. . . . The secret behind our holy unity until yesterday was "Down with the traitorous Shah!" and to-

day it is "Down with American Imperialism!" . . .

I would like to explain whom our revolution is against. Now after the victorious battle against the dictatorial tyranny of the Shah's regime is over, the Imam Khomeini has stated emphatically again and again to the people, "We are in a stage of anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism." This imperialism that we talk so much about — well — what is it? The simple definition is "world-eater" and "the world-eaters" are the imperialists! Have you heard of cannibals? Well, these "world-eaters" are worse! In this world there are two camps — one

from their meagre wages, or the loans obtained by pawning their few possessions. Who was behind the Coup of 1953 in Iran? Who sent 10 million dollars to Ashraf Pahlavi in Geneva so she with Alien Dulles, the head of American espionage, was able to build conspiracy against the legal government of Dr. Mohammad Mossadeq and overthrow it? Who organized the Savak? Who built the prisons and torture chambers? And after all whose trademarks are on the tools and devices of torture? By whose guns did our mothers and our sisters fall in their hundreds and thousands on the 17th Shahrivar? (The massacre of

lah Khomeini as their leader and the other organizations and political parties. ... In short the aim of the "crafty doves" is to create a split and force the people to fight each other. Their methods are more destructive than even an atomic bomb! The people do not fear the atomic bomb, because, the ones left behind shall be more united and know their enemies — but what about the people who have no unity? ...

A revolution is like a swift-flowing river; if it doesn't move forward it's certain to flow back, and will stagnate in the middle. Just as there is no halt in the earth's movement, any pause or stoppage would be wrong. So if we don't go forward there won't be any other meaning except we have gone back. So we have found a way of progress today, in those clenched fists raised against our main enemy. If we go forward in this way we shall see "The weakest house is the house of the spider." We shall see that Imperialism has no cunning or deceit that can work on us, because their roots are not rooted in justice. This world is not without a day of reckoning, and justice will prevail. Injustice will end.

The resolution of the Kurdish delegates, led by Ayatollah Sayed Ezeddin Hosseini of the Party of the Toiling Masses, presented to the government of Iran and Ayatollah Taleghani, March 23, 1979.

In the name of the merciful and generous God:

The Iranian Islamic Revolution, with the character of anti-imperialism and anti-dictatorship, has passed through an important stage in defeating the dictatorial monarchy. Yet, the attainment of its principal goals are to be achieved by continuing the struggle of all national and progressive forces throughout the country. With regard to this fact, the Kurdish people, from the beginning, have insisted that the com-

A revolution is like a swift-flowing river; if it doesn't move forward it's certain to flow back, and will stagnate in the middle.

camp consists of imperialists, and in the other camp are the deprived nations and the people. There is no connection of relationship between these two camps except slavery and war. We are either held captive or rebel. In this connection there is no quarter given or mercy shown, they don't exist! Who are the guardians of these "world-eaters"? Look at the four corners of the world today and you will understand! Who in recent years had slaughtered one million people in Indonesia? Who slaughtered three million in Vietnam? Who slaughtered tens of thousands in Chile? Who put his illegitimate baby in the Middle East, that today is causing so much bloodshed? Whose hands are behind South Africa? And who is destroying the roofs over the heads of the black people? Who was behind the ones who destroyed the houses of the people — here in the South of Tehran. It didn't matter to them at all, how these houses had been built, the hardship entailed saving

people praying in Jaleh Square on the morning of Friday, September 8th, 1978.) And who started the fire in the Rex Cinema? (The Rex Cinema in Abadan was burnt down with no survivors from the audience. It was a Savak operation.) And who organized the cudgel-carrying gangs? (Policemen and paid Shah supporters would club to death wounded people in hospitals and attack demonstrations to cover the excuse for soldiers opening fire.) And who are the ones who plundered and carried off our oil? From 1974-1976 the sales of guns to Iran increased seven-fold! . . .

The American political plans to trigger a civil war shall start in the following ways. First, to incite the national minorities like the Kurds, Arabs, and Baluch, against Farsi-speaking Iranians. Then to start agitation in the autonomous regions. . . . Secondly, starting feuds between the different revolutionary groups, especially between the Islamic revolutionaries with Ayatol-

plete vindication of their national rights be recognized as a part of these principal goals of the Iranian revolution. However, in spite of the insistence and urging of the Kurdish people, and despite the necessity and the priority felt by everyone in this regard, the resolution of this matter is being postponed. Thus, Kurdish delegates, from urban and rural areas of Kurdistan, have gathered in Sanandaj and are negotiating with the delegates, fully authorized by the revolutionary leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, and led by Ayatollah Taleghani, and representatives of the provisional government of the Islamic Revolution, led by Mr. Hajj Seyed Javad, the Minister of Interior.

Once again, the delegates feel it necessary to announce their full support for all eight demands drafted by the Kurdish delegates in Mahabad and supported by millions

right, they oppose any plan for considering secession.

1. The right of self-determination implies the establishment of the cultural, political, and economic sovereignty for the people in their historical territory. Related to this is the fact that recognition of this right will provide and guarantee national unity and integrity.

2. Politically, the autonomous government should be elected by Kurdish people themselves, should administer the political and official power in Kurdistan, and should participate in the central government in unity with the other Iranian nationalities having equal rights.

3. The severance of military dependency on imperialist countries and all foreign expansionist powers, and the establishment of a people's army throughout Iran which would be administered by the central government in order to protect the

against the imperialist powers and all types of dependency upon the international and regional expansionist powers, the support of liberation movements of the oppressed masses, and the friendly cooperation with all countries which recognize the right to the independence and sovereignty of Iran, will be administered by the central government.

6. The elimination of all forms and manifestations of cultural oppression, which guarantees freedom and respect for religion, language, customs, traditions, and beliefs of all Iranian nationalities. The Kurdish language should be recognized as the official language in all educational, official, and social institutions of the Kurdistan territory, however noting and emphasizing the point that the Persian language will remain, as previously, the official language throughout Iran.

7. The development of agriculture and industry in Kurdistan and the provision of such a priority such that it guarantees the recovery from backwardness which has stemmed from national oppression; and the total severance of the colonial and imperialist economic influence throughout the country and its basis in Kurdistan.

8. The provisional government of the Islamic revolution is expected to refrain from any contact, negotiation, and compromise with reactionary opportunist agents with regard to the resolution of problems related to the Kurds and Kurdistan; and note that the resolution of the people's principal problems is only possible within the framework of fraternal agreement and understanding between the people's representatives.

The right of self-determination implies the establishment of the cultural, political, and economic sovereignty for the people in their historical territory

of Kurdish people in all the cities and villages of Kurdistan which were submitted to the central government. They further proclaim their repeated support for the Ayatollah Khomeini's leadership and for the government of Mr. Bazargan. They also feel it necessary to re-emphasize and repeat that while they consider that the undeniable and uncompromisable principle of the right to self-determination is their, and all other nations', natural

borders and the achievements of the revolution.

4. The establishment of a security force of people under the supervision of the autonomous government of Kurdistan would be responsible for internal security and order and would replace the previous police and gendarme.

5. The foreign policy, the principles of which can be summarized as the protection of the independence and integrity of Iran, the struggle

The more accurately we recognize and observe the laws of history and class struggle, so much the more do we conform to dialectic materialism. The more insight we have into dialectic materialism, the greater will be our success.

J. Stalin

The more accurately we recognize and observe the laws of nature and life, . . . so much the more do we conform to the will of the Almighty. The more insight we have into the will of the Almighty, the greater will be our successes.

Martin Bormann

Intelligent idealism is closer to intelligent materialism than stupid materialism.

V. I. Lenin

Stalin's little book on philosophy

By Lance Hill

In 1938, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union commissioned a new history; Stalin's personal contribution was the chapter entitled "Dialectical and Historical Materialism." The impact of this philosophical work has been substantial over the years; it is widely studied as an authoritative elaboration of Marxist theory. Part of the reason for this is that this pamphlet was published in millions of copies in all languages, while Marx's *1844 Manuscripts* and *Grundrisse* and Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks* lay on the shelves gathering dust. Its significance as an example of the continuity of contemporary Soviet theory is reflected in the fact that it is one of the few works of Stalin

that survived the official censorship by the new regime after his death, and to this day it still graces the publication list of International Publishers. Since the article is the source of many contemporary Marxist theories, we think it merits analysis. Moreover, this analysis should be made independent of a consideration of Stalin's historic role. (One thing which should be noted here is Stalin's regular practice of distorting positions he dis-

agrees with. In the article under consideration, this is most evident in the discussion of idealism, which he treats with consistent contempt, in contrast to Lenin, who characterized it as "one of the shades . . . of the infinitely complex knowledge [dialectical] of man."¹)

Some may object from the start that Stalin's article was intended to be a simplification of Marxist theory, and any critique should make allowances for such a popularization. The assumption here is that any simplification of Marxist theory can occur without making fundamental distortions.

In fact, Marxism as a theory of history involves a complex method, one which is a decisive break from conventional logic and common sense. Any attempt to generalize such a challenge to common sense in a period when common sense is the dominant mode of thinking will eventually subordinate the real content of the theory to vulgar and contradictory explanations. This is not to say that we can not attempt to present aspects of Marxism in a popular way. It only asserts that there is a minimum level of analysis demanded if we are to avoid fundamental distortion, and accordingly the process by which people begin to approach a popular understanding of Marxist

method involves a demand upon Marxists themselves to prepare the class intellectually.

Materialism and Dialectics: The Duality of Stalin's Theory

Stalin begins his exposition of Marxist theory by presenting Marxism as two theories, or more accurately, "sciences." "Dialectical Materialism" is the first part, and is referred to as such because "its approach to the phenomena of nature, its method of studying and apprehending them is dialectical, while its interpretation of the phenomena of nature, its conception of these phenomena, its theory, is materialistic."² The other part of Marxist theory is "Historical Materialism," which is "the extension of the principles of dialectical materialism to the study of social life. . . ."³ Following this outline, Stalin then sets out to examine each independently.

This presents a serious problem from the outset. Such a distinction occurs nowhere in the writings of Marx, and with good reason. In what sense can we separate the process by which we apprehend a phenomenon, or "study" a phenomenon, from the process by which we "interpret" or attribute meaning to a phenomenon? Is it

possible to study anything without proceeding from some initial assumptions about its meaning? Are not the categories by which we study a phenomenon themselves a product of some kind of "interpretation" of previous phenomena? Any kind of separation of approach and interpretation can only mean a separation of dialectics as a *method* from materialism as a *method*. It is purely an artificial construction on Stalin's part. As we shall see, it leads him to separate man from nature and social life from material production. In order to avoid these dualisms, we have to view dialectics as a system of thought, a theory of knowledge inseparable from the subject matter we are dealing with.

In *Philosophical Notebooks* Lenin observes: "Logic is the science not of external forms of thought, but of the laws of development 'of all material, natural and spiritual, things,' i.e., of the development of the *entire concrete content of the world* and its cognition, i.e., the sum-total, the conclusions of the History of the Knowledge of the world." (emphasis added)⁴ Stalin separates the study of nature and the social world (i.e., social relations): dialectical materialism and historical materialism. This distinction implies that man's existence can be separated out from nature, understood apart from nature. It is an important distinction for Stalin, since further on in the article he maintains that man's social life is a simple reflex of his material life, an assertion difficult to make without initially setting man apart from the natural world. How did Marx view this relationship between man and nature?

Labour is in the first place a process in which both man and nature participate, and in which man of his own accord, regulates and controls the material reactions between himself and nature. He opposes himself to nature as one of her own

forces, setting into motion arms and legs, heads and hands, the natural forces of his body, in order to appropriate nature's productions. . . . By thus acting on the external world and changing it, he at the same time changes his own nature. . . ."⁵

and

Here again, as everywhere, the identity of nature and man appears, in that the limited relation of men to nature determines their limited relation to each other, and their limited relation to each other determines their limited relation to nature. . . ."⁶

Here nature and man appear in somewhat of a different relationship from what Stalin presents us with. The point is that production, material production, is a process carried out by people. History is only the history of man as a force of nature organizing himself into social relations necessary for the reproduction of life. And as Marx points out above, he does not merely "wish" his way into social relations, but in fact has the boundaries and possibilities set by his limited relation to nature. In the particular case of capitalism, this is realized through the domination of living labor by dead labor (capital). In either case Marx is emphasizing the dialectical unity of the two. For Stalin, the separation is the initial stage for excluding man's purposive activity from the central role in history, removing man as the subject of history. The implications of this error become clear in the section on the role of the proletariat and revolutionary consciousness.

Stalin's Dialectic

With this understanding we can turn to his exposition of the ele-

ments of dialectics and materialism, which are treated separately. In the first section he outlines *four aspects* of the dialectical method.

Interdependence. The first aspect is the law of interdependence. This passage seems to be harmless enough. It establishes that "a phenomenon can be understood and explained if considered in its inseparable connection with surrounding phenomena, as one conditioned by surrounding phenomena."⁷ Closer observation begins to unravel what is, in fact, a fundamentally different notion of interdependence from what we find in Marx or Lenin. Stalin poses it as a question of how a separate entity is shaped by that which *surrounds* it. Phenomena are "acted upon" in this sense, take on their meaning through this conditioning (later on he gives examples of this), and there is no sense of a reciprocal unity within a totality. Movement is not through this unity, but rather externally determined. Here, again, Lenin:

the entire totality of the manifold relations of this thing to others . . . the internally contradictory tendencies (and sides) in this thing . . . the relations of this thing (phenomenon, etc.) are not only manifold but general, universal. Each thing (phenomenon, process, etc.) is connected with each other.⁸

Interconnection, manifold and universal — this is something more complex than simple conditioning; it implies a unity, a contradictory unity within the thing itself. Again Stalin separates that which exists in a mutual unity.

Stalin's Movement. The second point of Stalin's is the constant movement of the phenomena, thus "dialectics holds that nature is not at a state of rest and immobility, stagnation and immutability, but a state of continuous movement and

change."⁹ This is all quite true, but there is no sense of the *supercession* of phenomena (Hegel's term *Aufhebung*). For instance, the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat flows from the conception of socialism as a transitional stage that developed out of and through capitalism, thus capitalism does not "collide" (Stalin speaks of the "collision" of opposites) with the forces of socialism and then get carried out dead on a stretcher. And neither does socialism develop separately from capitalism. Stalin's movement is of distinct forces, and the reason he can not account for the source of movement is precisely because he does not see the fact that it occurs through contradiction

the old and the emergence of the new."¹⁰

From this exposition we can see that change is not just death of something but the transformation of a thing into its opposite, as well as the fact that this change finds its source of movement through contradiction and is *self-movement*. Thus every phenomenon, labor, capital, etc. contains within it its own opposite, and the struggle within it of these contradictory tendencies is the source of change.

Quality and Quantity and Contradiction. Stalin argues that qualitative changes occur "not accidentally but as the natural result of an accumulation of imperceptible and

two, for once again Stalin has separated them out from their unity into a simple linear process of change. The examples he uses remind us of the theory of phenomena being "conditioned" by surrounding phenomena, an external force (in this case heat) applied to a separate object (water).¹² As Gramsci notes:

In the case of man, who is this external agent? In the factory it is the division of labor, etc., conditions *created by man himself* (emphasis added). In society it is the ensemble of productive forces. . . . However in

every phenomenon, labor, capital, etc., contains within it its own opposite, and the struggle of these contradictory elements is the source of change.

of identical opposites. Lenin gives a distinctly different analysis:

The identity of opposites (it would be more correct, perhaps, to say their "unity," although the difference between the terms identity and unity is not particularly important here. In a certain sense they are both correct) is the recognition (discovery) of the contradictory, *mutually exclusive*, opposite tendencies in *all* phenomena and processes of nature (including mind and society). The condition for knowledge of all processes of the world in their "*self-movement*," in their spontaneous development, in their real life, is the knowledge of them as a unity of opposites . . . [this] alone furnishes the key to the "self-movement" of everything existing; it alone furnishes the key to the "leaps," to the "break in continuity," to the "transformation into the opposite," to the destruction of

gradual quantitative changes."¹¹ We should note that this is only one aspect of this category of dialectical logic. It is the more "commonsensical" side of the problem. The more difficult question is how, concretely, do different quantities of the same thing change the quality of it, or why is it that a phenomenon is something other than its constituent parts taken separately. For instance, a thousand soldiers fighting together on a battlefield constitute qualitatively something different from a thousand fighting separately. Common sense tells us it is concentration that makes the difference. Yet a thousand soldiers fighting separately, scattered throughout the countryside, can sometimes be more effective than a thousand in concentration. As we can see, it is an aspect of dialectics that is not only complex, but forces us to recognize the unity of the two sides. Yet in Stalin the quality-quantity process becomes more one of causality. Small incremental changes in abstract quantity create large qualitative leaps. There is no room for how these new qualities affect the quantity. There is no appreciation of the reciprocal relation of the

the philosophy of praxis (Marxism — ed.) quality is also connected to quantity and this connection is perhaps its most fertile contribution.¹³

But there is another role that quantity plays in Stalin's formulation, and that is its relationship to contradiction:

the struggle between opposites . . . constitutes the internal content of the process of development, the *internal content of the transformation of quantitative changes into qualitative change*.¹⁴ (emphasis added)

This wording poses change as occurring through incremental quantitative changes, the content of which is contradiction. But it is self-evident that changing the quality of something can change the quantity. For instance, the quality of labor can affect the quantity of labor. For Stalin, this is a one-way process; change occurs through quantity exclusively. But what is the

quantitative change that occurs which would drive the Russian proletariat from trade unionism to soviets? This is a paradox that Stalin would be at a loss to explain.

Categories of Thought

Nowhere in Stalin's treatment of the dialectical method do we find that concept of changing categories of thought, a very important aspect of dialectics that received particular attention in Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks*. Because the process of comprehending an object or phenomenon involves the actual cognition of the thing in its process of change, the categories that we attribute to this thing or phenomenon will necessarily embody these contradictions also. Thus the very categories with which we analyze the world around us are also in the process of change, and cannot be taken as fixed, immutable definitions. The *viewpoint* we use to analyze society is itself subject to change. Lenin:

If everything develops, then everything passes from one into another, for development as is well known is not a simple, universal and eternal *growth, enlargement* (respective diminution), etc. If that is so, then, in the first place, evolution has to be understood *more exactly*, as the arising and passing away of everything, as mutual transitions. And, in the second place, if *everything* develops, does not that apply to the most general *concepts* and *categories* of thought? If not, it means that thinking is not connected with being. If it does, it means that there is a dialectics of concepts and a dialectics of cognition which has objective significance.¹⁵

In fact, it was soon after Lenin's study of this notion of Hegel's that

he analyzed the fixed use of the phrase "defense of the fatherland," as meaning one thing in the imperialist nations and quite another in the oppressed nations.

Stalin's error in this respect can be seen in his example of the role of slavery when he observes that the slave system is senseless and stupid "under modern conditions" yet quite natural and "understandable" during the disintegration of the primitive communal system. Here he makes two errors. The first, of secondary importance here, is the assumption that the various stages of economic development and "their" social forms are compulsory, natural and fixed. Second, and most important, while Stalin sees the various productive systems changing, he neither sees the content of the slave system changing nor the category of "slave" in our thought changing. For him, the concept remains the same, denoting the same content. Thus a slave under conditions of Roman conquest would be the same as a slave in the pre-Civil War U.S. The problem arises when we attempt to analyze society and production by using the categories such as "slave," "proletariat," "socialism," "war," etc., without understanding their transitional character.¹⁶ The omission of this aspect of dialectics allows for many other erroneous observations by Stalin, and certainly plagues most of the Marxist movement today.

Matter and Consciousness

Stalin's view follows a process of formal reasoning: thought is a product of the human brain, the human brain is a product of matter, thus thought, consciousness, is "secondary, derivative, since it is the reflection of matter."¹⁷ It is through this process that Stalin confirms both the authenticity of our thought and the objectivity of the material world. We end up with an "objective reality existing outside and independent of our mind."¹⁸

But what is objective reality? While there is certainly a world of matter, it cannot be confused with the substance of this matter. People are of matter. So are noses. But when, through a historical process, we abstract from our practical interaction with people that what is essential to them is their Humanity, then we are participating through thought and action in the process of constructing a reality. Further, through the different relations that these "material" people enter into, we begin to view them not only as people in general but also as *classes*. And the process continues on as we develop a deeper understanding of what this matter *essentially* is. In fact, no "reality" exists independent of man, since man is constantly creating new realities through his own activity and thought. As Lenin notes:

Man's consciousness not only reflects the objective world, but creates it.¹⁹

and

i.e., that the world does not satisfy man and man decides to change it by his activity.²⁰

This process of gaining knowledge is not one of "passive" man being stamped with material impulses, rather:

Knowledge is the reflection of nature by man. But this is not simple, not immediate, not complete reflection, but the process of a series of abstractions, the formation and development of concepts, laws, etc., and these concepts, laws, etc., (thought, science = "the logical Idea") *embrace* conditionally, approximately, the universal law-governed character of the eternally moving and developing nature.²¹

Practice as An Aspect of Knowledge

Unlike Stalin's photographic, passive reflection of the world, we see instead that our knowledge of reality is a process of development, one which involves and takes on meaning through active experiences. As Gramsci notes, objective reality is always a question of *viewpoint*, thus "humanly objective." The difference between this and relativism or idealism, which assumes that reality is purely a human construction, is that:

(east and west) these references are real: they correspond to real facts, they allow us to travel by land and by seas, to arrive where one has decided to arrive, to "foresee" the future, to objectivise reality, to understand the objectivity of the external world. Rational and real become one,"²²

The mediating element is practice — human practice. Practice is often thought of as laboratory practice, or exclusively the practice of the party. Often it is posed as serving

Stalin's Conclusions

Party and *Consciousness*:

Stalin's view that ideas emanate from reflecting on a material world distinct from consciousness or human activity leads to another political paradox. While it is clear that the material basis for reactionary ideas exists in the material fabric of capitalist society, whence arise revolutionary, socialist ideas and consciousness? There is nothing in the material world (using Stalin's definition) that is "socialist" in content. At this point, Stalin avoids the paradox by merely asserting that there are "new" ideas and "old" ideas, and that the new ideas serve the advance of the forces of production.²⁴ But into whose minds do these ideas first appear, out of what experiences, and in what way can an idea be derived from a material world that is its opposite?²⁵ The answers to these questions cannot be found in Stalin. He sees the proletariat as essentially an object, carrying out the demands of history rather than history carrying out the demands of the proletariat. Compare the following, first Stalin:

He sees the proletariat as essentially an object, carrying out the demands of history...

theory, the way that we "test" theory.²³ It must be understood as as much a part of gaining knowledge as thought itself. And it must be understood as Human practice, the practice of all humanity, which does not exclude social classes and their practice over a period of years. The concept of Human activity as a way of confirming and creating a reality is outside Stalin's theoretical framework. He has separated Man from Nature, "approach" from interpretation, and made thought a vulgar reflection of the objective world.

Arising out of the new tasks set by the development of the material life of society, the new social ideas and theories force their way through, become the possession of the masses, mobilize and organize them against the moribund forces of society, and thus facilitate the overthrow of these forces which hamper the development of the material life of society.²⁶

then Engels:

History does nothing, it "possesses *no* immense wealth", it "wages no battles". It is Man, and not "History", real living man, that does all that, that possesses and fights; history is not, as it were, a person apart, using man as a means to achieve its *own* aims; history is *nothing* but the activity of man pursuing his aims.²⁷

Instead of Feuerbach's determinist "History" we have Stalin's one-sided "material forces of society" using man, feeding him ideas by which he merely facilitates the inevitable material march of the forces of production. Actually, he breaks from his usual analysis here since the revolutionary ideas arise not from the material world, but from the "new tasks" of the material world, and these ideas organize man. In Stalin, man vacillates from being the hopeless puppet of matter to being the hopeless puppet of ideas. At no point is revolutionary consciousness attributed to a contradiction between his conditions of life and his essence as creative man.

The Party:

With the above notion of revolutionary consciousness as derivative ideas, it is relatively easy to view the party as *distinct from*, external to, the proletariat. It appears that the party alone possesses the ability to discern the laws of the material world. The party is by Stalin's definition that section of society which takes the ideas to the class since, as the first sentence of the article states, "Dialectical Materialism is the world outlook of the Marxist-Leninist party." In this process the proletariat is treated as the object

of the material forces of society and the party relates to the proletariat as such an object. It follows that no practice on the part of the proletariat outside the guidance of the party can be revolutionary, and again, this conception of the role of the party flows from the Stalinist analysis of consciousness and how it develops.

Revolutionary Consciousness:

What, then, is the source of consciousness and revolutionary consciousness from a Marxist dialectical view? If we were to start from the assumption that the source of movement, and in this case the particular development of different aspects of proletarian consciousness and their movement, is to be found in the internally contradictory sides of a thing, then it becomes clearer how both bourgeois and revolutionary ideas can emerge. If we were to ask what causes the proletariat to accept bourgeois and revolutionary conceptions of itself (not just where these different world views originate), then we would have to look at the contradictory sides of the proletariat *within itself*. It is, at the same moment, both a subordinate class as wage labor and yet the subject of history, the producing class. It has on the one hand its real existence (its *being*) as alienated labor and on the other hand its essential humanity struggling to be expressed (its *essence*). Both these aspects exist together in a contradictory struggle, and each can only be defined by reference to the other. Marx illuminates this perspective in his reply to Feuerbach, responding to Feuerbach's notion that one's being corresponds to one's essence (which is very similar to Stalin's formulation that, "What-ever is the being of a society . . . such are the ideas"):

Thus if millions of proletarians feel by no means contented with their living conditions, if their "being" does not in the least correspond with their "essence",

then, according to the passage quoted, this is an unavoidable misfortune which must be borne quietly. These millions of proletarians or communists, however, think quite differently and will prove this in time, when they bring their "being" into harmony with their "essence", in a practical way, by means of revolution.²⁸

From this we can see that the class is itself contradictory, between what it both is and is not. Whatever the process is by which it "borrows" bourgeois ideas about itself, the source of this acceptance is that aspect of the contradiction of being subordinate, its being. And yet its essence, born out of its daily life in production, struggles with this, its position as the producer, and herein lies the source of its revolutionary consciousness. In this constellation, the role of the party becomes something other than the source of revolutionary ideas abstractly gleaned through the science of Marxism. The knowledge of the party and the knowledge of the class are but two moments of the same process of the gaining of knowledge of the class. On the contrary, the conventional strict division of the "spontaneous" activity of the class and the "revolutionary socialist" activity of the party finds its theoretical argument in Stalin.

Stalin's Motive Force of History:

Now we come to the question, what is the source of historical movement? Stalin introduces his theory with a description of the forces of production and the relations of production, here again as two distinct elements that collide or contradict. Within the forces of production he includes the instruments of production (factories, tools), and the people who operate the instruments. The relations of production are defined as the social "mutual relations of one kind or another," necessary to produce.

From this, Stalin postulates that "a second feature of production is that changes and development always begin with changes and development of the productive forces, and, in the first place, with changes and development of the instruments of production. Productive forces are therefore the most mobile and revolutionary element of production."²⁹

Stalin concedes that the productive relations "influence" the forces of production by "accelerating" or "retarding" their development. But the essential relationship between the two is that one element is derivative. Again this is based in his notion of interdependence as "*conditioned* by surrounding phenomena" (emphasis added). He even extends this to argue that the forces of production and the relations of production cannot lag behind each other since that would violate "the unity of the productive forces and the relations of production."³⁰ This is a harmonic, not a contradictory, unity. Was there ever a period in the development of capitalism when the proletariat, as a force of production and the producer of these relations, could exist in harmony with the relations of production? Of course, no such situation could ever exist, since the proletariat has always embodied the contradiction within itself as both being and essence. It, and it alone, is the common element found in both "forces of production" and "relations of production."

Having removed man from his central role in history, having reduced him to an agent of the material forces of society that can at best condition, retard, or accelerate the material forces of production, Stalin has absolutely nowhere else to look for the source of movement in history other than the transformation of matter, i.e., inventions. But the "invention" itself is not *just* a cause in any sense of the word. *All* inventions are also an effect, the effect of *human creative activity*. Unfortunately for Stalin, even his technicist, non-contradictory source of movement contains

within it the very element which he sought to abolish:

Nature builds no machines, no locomotives, railways, electric telegraphs, self-acting mules, etc. These are products of human industry; natural material transformed into organs of human will over nature, or of human participation in nature. They are *organs of the human brain, created by the human hand*; the power of knowledge objectified. The development of fixed capital indicates to what degree general social knowledge has become a *direct force of production*, and to what degree, hence, the conditions of the process of social life itself have come under the control of general intellect and been transformed in accordance with it.³¹

Not only is Stalin lacking a real concept of self-movement and contradiction; the very method he uses prevents such an analysis. Any formulation that divides production into two separate entities and has them collide can hardly account for movement. We make reference to an observation from the "mature" Marx:

Forces of production and social relations — two different sides of the development of the social individual — appear to capital as mere means, and are merely means for it to produce on its limited foundation. In fact, however, they are the material conditions to blow this foundation sky-high.³²

Conclusions

There are many currents of thought regarding Stalin's theory. Some, such as Bettelheim's, treat it as an ideological formation that has to be viewed within the context of

the history of the Soviet Union.³³ That certainly helps explain some formulations: the exclusion of human practico-critico activity would be important for representing soviet society as free of internal contradictions in production.

But regardless of the origin of this thinking, it is still taken seriously, at least in the U.S. left, and is still taken to be something of an authority on Marxism. While there are some disturbing gaps, and while Stalin is prone to conjuring up phrases with ambiguous and interchangeable meanings, there is a consistency to the presentation, a congruence between method and conclusions. Far from being a simple popularization, it is a complex vulgarization of different elements of Marxism. But we can no more theorize away the legacy of Stalin than he could theorize away the active, subject role of the proletariat. They are both quite real.

Footnotes

1. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Volume 38 (Progress Publishers, 1972), page 363.
2. J. V. Stalin, *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* (International Publishers, 1975), page 5.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Lenin, *op. cit.*, page 93.
5. Karl Marx, *Capital*, Volume I (New World Paperbacks, 1974), page 177.
6. Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*, cited in T. B. Bottomore and Maximilien Rubel's *Karl Marx* (McGraw-Hill, 1964). Bottomore's translation differs from the International Publishers "Marx-Engels Collected Works." International Publishers translated the word "relation" as "attitude," although this passage occurs within an analysis that makes

continual reference to "relations." In either case, it emphasizes the inseparability of these two aspects.

7. Stalin, *op. cit.*, page 7.
8. Lenin, *op. cit.*, pages 221-222.
9. Stalin, *op. cit.*, page 7.
10. Lenin, *op. cit.*, pages 359-360.
11. Stalin, *op. cit.*, page 8.
12. Here Stalin relies heavily on Engels' *Dialectics of Nature*, which was not available until after Lenin's death. Certainly the context within which Stalin cites this passage suggests that this alone is the essence of the Marxist concept of quantity-quality. It should be noted that even Lenin had difficulty with Engels' "popularizations." Cf. Lenin, *op. cit.*, page 357.
13. Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks* (International Publishers, 1975), page 469.
14. Stalin, *op. cit.*, page 11.
15. Lenin, *op. cit.*, page 253. Original emphasis.
16. Trotsky was guilty of the same error, particularly regarding his analysis of the Soviet Union. Cf. C. L. R. James, *State Capitalism and World Revolution* (Facing Reality).
17. Stalin, *op. cit.*, page 16.
18. *Ibid.* This schema is still quite acceptable to sections of the U.S. left. Irwin Silber argues that the incompatibility of Marxism and religion rests with the "underlying premise . . . that there is only one world, the world of matter." (*The Guardian*, May 23, 1979) Compare this argumentation to the slightly more complex analysis of Marx in *The German Ideology: The Leipzig Council III. Saint Max*.
19. Lenin, *op. cit.*, page 212.
20. *Ibid.*, page 213.
21. *Ibid.*, page 182.
22. Gramsci, *op. cit.*, page 447. Gramsci also notes that the concepts of east and west are part of a reality that reflects the history of man. The fact that Hawaii is considered to be

- west of the northamerican United States, and that Japan is to the east, denotes the historical origins of the terms, and their ideological content.
23. The most thorough popularization of this aspect appears in Mao's "On Contradiction," which has been used predominantly as an admonition to "do it." It is difficult to deny that Mao's contribution in many ways fills a void in contemporary Marxist theory, in a popular sense. Yet there are some serious problems with his formulation, particularly the implication that practice that enlarges the knowledge of the class occurs exclusively through the party, and that production and class practice are in some way distinct. See Glaberman, *Mao as Dialectician* (Bewick/ed, 1971), although Glaberman seems to suggest that the practice of the party cannot be a part of the development of the proletariat's self-knowledge.
 24. Stalin, *op. cit.*, page 23.
 25. It is interesting that even Stalin's attempt to render a Marxist authenticity to his view betrays a questionable intent. On page 21 Stalin says, "Whatever is the being of a society . . . such *are* the ideas, theories, political views and political institutions of that society." (emphasis added) Yet the quote from Marx states, ". . . their social being that *determines* their consciousness." (emphasis added) The difference between "determine" and "are" is not just nitpicking. "Are" implies a reflexive identity, and it should be clear that Marx attributes this to only the most primitive stage of man's development (*The German Ideology*, Marx-Engels Collected Works, page 36). "Conceiving, thinking, the mental intercourse of men at this stage still appear as the direct efflux of their material behavior."
 26. Stalin, *op. cit.*, page 23.
 27. Engels, *The Holy Family*, cited by Lenin in *op. cit.*
 - page 36.
 28. Marx, *The German Ideology*, page 58.
 29. Stalin, *op. cit.*, page 31.
 30. *Ibid.*
 31. Marx, *Grundrisse* (Vintage Books, 1973), page 706.
 32. *Ibid.*
 33. Bettelheim goes beyond just this aspect of Stalin, but it would be a mistake to see his analysis as a clear break, since many aspects of Stalin's underlying theory influence Bettelheim's analysis. He argues that Stalin did not understand the difference between the dictatorship of the proletariat and the dictatorship of the proletariat through the party. Bettelheim sees no real problem with the *party* acting as the instrument of this dictatorship. In this sense he represents a growing tendency within the Stalinist left that challenges aspects of Stalin, but not the theoretical foundations of Stalin's materialism.

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