

DRAFT NOTES ON THE MASS LINE AND OUR WORK

I. OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS THOSE OF US ENGAGED IN POLITICAL WORK AMONG S.F. MUNI RAILWAY TRANSIT OPERATORS HAVE DEVELOPED CERTAIN BASIC DIFFERENCES OF OPINION ABOUT HOW THE WORK IS GOING AND ABOUT HOW IT SHOULD BE DONE. WE HAVE MADE MANY ATTEMPTS TO SUM UP OUR WORK, BUT WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO REACH AGREEMENT. FREQUENT EFFORTS TO STRUGGLE OUT THESE DIFFERENCES HAVE LED US FINALLY INTO A DEBATE OVER THE THEORY UNDERLYING OUR DIFFERENT SUMMATIONS. THIS THEORETICAL DEBATE HAS MORE AND MORE CENTERED ON THE QUESTION OF THE MASS LINE.¹

UNFORTUNATELY, SO FAR THIS THEORETICAL STRUGGLE HASN'T ACCOMPLISHED MUCH. IT HAS BECOME CLEAR THAT TWO OPPOSING LINES EXIST, TWO MUTUALLY HOSTILE CONCEPTIONS OF THE MASS LINE. BUT WHAT EXACTLY THESE TWO CONCEPTIONS ARE HAS NOT BEEN BROUGHT OUT CLEARLY--LET ALONE ALL THE IMPLICATIONS OF EACH LINE. IN FACT BOTH OF THESE INCOMPATIBLE CONCEPTIONS ARE VIEWED BY THEIR PROPONENTS AS FULLY COMPATIBLE (OR EVEN IDENTICAL) WITH THE THEORY OF THE MASS LINE AS EXPOUNDED BY THE PARTY (IN THE PAMPHLET ON THE MASS LINE AND IN OTHER DOCUMENTS) AND BY MAO AND THE OTHER GREAT MARXIST-LENINISTS IN THEIR WRITINGS ON QUESTIONS OF THE MASS LINE. EACH SIDE THINKS IT UNDERSTANDS THE OTHER'S ERRORS, AND YET EACH SIDE ACCUSES THE OTHER OF DISTORTING ITS OWN POSITION. THESE CHARGES OF DISTORTION ARE MET WITH ON BOTH SIDES WITH COUNTER-CHARGES THAT THEIR OPPONENTS ARE TRYING TO WEASEL OUT OF POSITIONS THEY HAVE TAKEN WHENEVER AN UNCOMFORTABLE CONCLUSION IS DRAWN FROM THEM OR AN EMBARRASSING FACT IS BROUGHT UP. IN SHORT THE THEORETICAL DEBATE HAS NOT BEEN HANDLED CORRECTLY. IT HAS BEEN SLIP-SHOD, TOO INFORMAL, AND NOT TREATED WITH THE SERIOUSNESS IT DESERVES.

I BELIEVE THAT THIS STRUGGLE CAN BE CONDUCTED MORE SERIOUSLY AND WITH A BETTER CHANCE OF ACHIEVING UNITY AROUND THE CORRECT LINE, IF THE OPPOSING POSITIONS ARE COMMITTED TO PAPER AND SPELLED OUT WITH AS MUCH CARE AS POSSIBLE. THE POINT IS NOT TO PERMANENTLY COMMIT EACH SIDE TO EVERY WRITTEN SENTENCE WHICH MAY THEN BE SEIZED UPON BY THE OTHER IF IT HAS EVEN AN ELEMENT OF ERROR IN IT, BUT TO FULLY BRING OUT THE TWO OPPOSING LINES, WITH THEIR IMPLICATIONS AND THE REAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THEM. IF EACH SIDE WANTS TO REVISE ITS POSITION IN LIGHT OF WHAT THE OTHER COMES UP WITH, THEN ALL THE BETTER. WHAT WE ARE AIMING FOR, IN FACT, IS FOR THE PROPONENTS OF ONE OF THE TWO LINES (ASSUMING THE OTHER IS CORRECT) TO REVISE THE ESSENCE OUT OF ITS POSITION; THAT IS, TO RECOGNIZE THAT THEY ARE ESSENTIALLY WRONG, EVEN IF, AS MAY WELL MAY BE THE CASE, SOME OF THE SUBSIDIARY POINTS THEY HAVE RAISED HAVE SOME TRUTH TO THEM. WE ARE, IN OTHER WORDS, STRIVING FOR UNITY, BUT THIS UNITY IS IMPOSSIBLE UNLESS OUR DIFFERENCES ARE CLEARLY AND COMPLETELY BROUGHT OUT FIRST.

II. THE CORRECT VIEW OF THE MASS LINE.

THE THEORY OF THE MASS LINE IS PART OF THE LARGER WORLD VIEW WHICH IS KNOWN AS HISTORICAL MATERIALISM, WHICH IS ITSELF THE MAIN BRANCH OF MARXISM-LENINISM, MAO TSETUNG THOUGHT. "HISTORICAL MATERIALISM IS THE EXTENSION OF THE PRINCIPLES OF DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM TO THE STUDY OF SOCIAL LIFE, AN APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLES OF DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM TO THE PHENOMENA OF THE LIFE OF SOCIETY, TO THE STUDY OF SOCIETY AND ITS HISTORY." (STALIN, "DIALECTICAL AND HISTORICAL MATERIALISM," INT. PUB. ED., P. 5.) HISTORICAL MATERIALISM, THEREFORE, COVERS A LOT OF GROUND. CONTAINED WITHIN IT ARE SUCH BASIC PRINCIPLES AS THAT MATERIAL PRODUCTION IS THE BASIS OF SOCIAL LIFE; THAT SOCIAL BEING DETERMINES THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF MAN (AND NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND); THAT CLASSES EXIST THROUGH PEOPLES RELATIONSHIP TO THE MEANS OF PRODUCTION; THAT THE HISTORY OF SOCIETY (SINCE CLASSES FIRST DEVELOPED IN ANCIENT TIMES) IS THE HISTORY OF CLASS STRUGGLE; THAT "AT A CERTAIN STAGE OF THEIR DEVELOPMENT, THE MATERIAL PRODUCTIVE FORCES OF SOCIETY COME INTO CONFLICT WITH

THE EXISTING RELATIONS OF PRODUCTION...FROM FORMS OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRODUCTIVE FORCES THESE RELATIONS TURN INTO FETTERS. AT THAT POINT AN ERA OF SOCIAL REVOLUTION BEGINS." (MARX, "PREFACE TO A CONTRIBUTION TO THE CRITIQUE OF POLITICAL ECONOMY," PEKING, 1976, P. 3-4.); THAT SOCIETY MUST ULTIMATELY PROGRESS TO THE STAGE OF COMMUNISM WHERE CLASSES HAVE CEASED TO EXIST; AND MUCH, MUCH MORE. THERE IS, IN PARTICULAR, ONE VITAL PRINCIPLE OF HISTORICAL MATERIALISM CONCERNED WITH THE ROLE OF INDIVIDUALS AND THE MASSES IN HISTORY.

THIS LAST MENTIONED PART OF THE DOCTRINE OF HISTORICAL MATERIALISM, CONCERNED WITH THE ROLE OF THE MASSES IN HISTORY, BEGINS WITH THE FUNDAMENTAL PROPOSITION THAT IT IS THE MASSES WHO ARE THE MAKERS OF HISTORY, AS WELL AS THE SUBJECT OF HISTORY. IT IS ONLY NOW THAT WE COME TO THE THEORY OF THE MASS LINE WHICH IS BASED ON ALL THE PREVIOUSLY MENTIONED PRINCIPLES OF HISTORICAL MATERIALISM (INCLUDING ESPECIALLY THE PRINCIPLE THAT THE MASSES ARE THE MAKERS OF HISTORY)--BASED ON THEM IN THE SENSE THAT IT PRESUPPOSES THEM, BUT WHICH IS AN ADDITIONAL PART OF THE DOCTRINE OF HISTORICAL MATERIALISM AND NOT IDENTICAL TO THE WHOLE DOCTRINE OR TO ANY OF THE PREREQUISITE PARTS.

THE MASS LINE IS THE METHOD OF LEADING THE MASSES TO CARRY OUT THEIR HISTORICAL ROLE IN ADVANCING FROM CAPITALISM (AND LINGERING OLDER FORMS OF SOCIETY IN SOME PARTS OF THE WORLD), THROUGH SOCIALISM TO COMMUNIST SOCIETY. THE MASS LINE IS THE METHOD OF MOBILIZING THE MASSES TO STRUGGLE AGAINST THE ENEMY AND MAKE REVOLUTION.

A METHOD OF LEADERSHIP IS NECESSARY BECAUSE LEADERSHIP ITSELF IS NECESSARY. THE MASSES ARE INDEED THE MAKERS OF HISTORY. AND IF THE MASSES WERE TO SPONTANEOUSLY DEVELOP A SCIENTIFIC UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIETY AND THEIR ROLE IN CHANGING IT, AND SPONTANEOUSLY ORGANIZE THEMSELVES TO CARRY OUT THEIR HISTORIC TASK, CAPITALISM WOULD IMMEDIATELY AND AUTOMATICALLY COLLAPSE. SUCH IDEALISTIC SPONTANEITY DOES NOT, OF COURSE, EXIST. WHILE THE BASIS DOES EXIST FOR THE PROLETARIAT (BECAUSE OF ITS CLASS POSITION, THE EXPLOITATION AND OPPRESSION IT SUFFERS) TO BECOME CONSCIOUS OF ITSELF AND ITS HISTORIC ROLE, AND TO ORGANIZE ITSELF AND THE BROAD MASSES TO OVERTHROW CAPITALISM, THESE THINGS CAN ONLY HAPPEN IF THE (CORRECT) LEADERSHIP IS DEVELOPED AND IF THE SCIENTIFIC THEORY OF SOCIETY AND REVOLUTION (I.E., MARXISM-LENINISM, MAO TSETUNG THOUGHT) IS BROUGHT TO THE MASSES BY THAT LEADERSHIP. WE CAN THEREFORE SAY THAT THE MASS LINE IS ALSO BASED ON (PRESUPPOSES) THE EXISTENCE OF A CENTER OF REVOLUTIONARY LEADERSHIP, NAMELY THE PARTY OF THE PROLETARIAT.

SINCE THE EARLY REVOLUTIONARY ACTIVITY OF THE FOUNDERS OF THE THEORY OF COMMUNISM BACK IN THE 1840s, ENORMOUS PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE HAS BEEN GAINED WITH RESPECT TO CORRECT AND INCORRECT METHODS OF REVOLUTIONARY LEADERSHIP. DURING THESE THIRTEEN DECADES THERE WERE MANY SUCCESSES WHEN THE MASS LINE METHOD OF LEADERSHIP WAS FOLLOWED AS WELL AS TRAGIC FAILURES WHEN IT WASN'T (THOUGH OF COURSE THE MASS LINE IS NOT THE ONLY FACTOR DETERMINING VICTORY OR DEFEAT). DURING MOST OF THIS TIME THE THEORY OF THE MASS LINE WAS LARGELY UNCONSCIOUS, I.E., NOT EXPLICITLY SUMMED UP IN THE FORM OF THEORY. ALTHOUGH IT IS TO A DEGREE IMPLICIT IN CERTAIN CLASSIC STATEMENTS OF HISTORICAL MATERIALISM (SUCH AS THE BASIC VIEWPOINT THAT THE MASSES ARE THE MAKERS OF HISTORY), THE THEORY OF THE MASS LINE METHOD OF LEADERSHIP WAS ONLY CONSCIOUSLY FORMULATED BY MAO TSETUNG DURING THE YENAN PERIOD.²

IN SAYING THIS I DO NOT WANT TO DENY FOR ONE MOMENT THAT THE MASS LINE METHOD WAS SUCCESSFULLY USED BY LENIN AND OTHERS BEFORE MAO; INDEED THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION WOULD HAVE BEEN UNTHINKABLE HAD THE MASS LINE METHOD NOT BEEN EMPLOYED. FURTHERMORE THERE ARE ASPECTS OF THE THEORY OF THE MASS LINE WHICH WERE RAISED BY MARX, ENGELS AND LENIN LONG BEFORE MAO.³ (I WILL REFER TO SOME OF THESE BELOW IN DISCUSSING THE VARIOUS ELEMENTS WHICH TOGETHER MAKE UP THE MASS LINE.) BUT I STILL MAINTAIN THAT IT WAS MAO WHO RAISED THE MASS LINE TO THE LEVEL OF CONSCIOUS THEORY, WHO ELABORATED IT AND POINTED OUT ITS VARIOUS ASPECTS OR ELEMENTS AND THEIR INTERCONNECTIONS, AND THIS INDEED IS ONE OF HIS GREAT ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR WHICH THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD ARE SO INDEBTED. WHILE IT WAS MARX WHO ORIGINATED THE BASIC DOCTRINE OF HISTORICAL

MATERIALISM, IT IS IN NO WAY TO BELITTLE HIS EPOCH-MAKING CONTRIBUTION TO POINT OUT THAT OTHERS SINCE HIS TIME HAVE ENRICHED AND EXTENDED HISTORICAL MATERIALISM. SUCH A DEVELOPMENT IS TO BE EXPECTED OF ANY SCIENTIFIC THEORY, ESPECIALLY ONE OF SUCH BREADTH AND RICHNESS, AND ONLY SHOWS AGAIN WHAT A GREAT ADVANCE THE ORIGINAL FRAME-
WORK WAS.

WHAT THEN IS THE METHOD OF LEADERSHIP KNOWN AS THE MASS LINE? IN THE WORK IN WHICH WE FIND THE THEORY OF THE MASS LINE ELABORATED FOR THE FIRST TIME (THOUGH NOT THE PHRASE 'MASS LINE' ITSELF), MAO SAYS:

"IN ALL THE PRACTICAL WORK OF OUR PARTY, ALL CORRECT LEADERSHIP IS NECESSARILY 'FROM THE MASSES, TO THE MASSES.' THIS MEANS: TAKE THE IDEAS OF THE MASSES (SCATTERED AND UNSYSTEMATIC IDEAS) AND CONCENTRATE THEM (THROUGH STUDY TURN THEM INTO CONCENTRATED AND SYSTEMATIC IDEAS), THEN GO TO THE MASSES AND PROPAGATE AND EXPLAIN THESE IDEAS UNTIL THE MASSES EMBRACE THEM AS THEIR OWN, HOLD FAST TO THEM AND TRANSLATE THEM INTO ACTION, AND TEST THE CORRECTNESS OF THESE IDEAS IN SUCH ACTION. THEN ONCE AGAIN CONCENTRATE IDEAS FROM THE MASSES AND ONCE AGAIN GO TO THE MASSES SO THAT THE IDEAS ARE PERSEVERED IN AND CARRIED THROUGH. AND SO ON, OVER AND OVER AGAIN IN AN ENDLESS SPIRAL, WITH THE IDEAS BECOMING MORE CORRECT, MORE VITAL AND RICHER EACH TIME. SUCH IS THE MARXIST THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE." ("SOME QUESTIONS CONCERNING METHODS OF LEADERSHIP," JUNE 1, 1943, SW, VOL. III, P. 119.)

THE ESSENTIAL CORE OF THE MASS LINE IS THE SUMMATION AND CONCENTRATION OF THE IDEAS (AND EXPERIENCES) OF THE MASSES INTO A LINE WHICH IS MOST FULLY CAPABLE OF MOBILIZING THE MASSES AGAINST THE ENEMY. AND IF, IN ORDER TO KEEP THE MASS LINE METHOD OF LEADERSHIP FIRMLY FOCUSED IN OUR MINDS WE WERE TO CHOOSE A PHRASE WHICH ENCAPSULIZES THAT METHOD, THAT PHRASE WOULD HAVE TO BE "FROM THE MASSES, TO THE MASSES." ANYONE WHO HAS NOT GRASPED THIS ELEMENTARY POINT HAS NOT THE SLIGHTEST INKLING OF WHAT THE MASS LINE IS ALL ABOUT.

WE SEE FROM MAO'S DESCRIPTION OF THE MASS LINE THAT IT CONSISTS OF THREE MAIN PHASES OR COMPONENTS:

- 1) GATHERING AND SUMMING UP THE SCATTERED AND UNSYSTEMATIC IDEAS OF THE MASSES,
- 2) CONCENTRATING THESE IDEAS WITH THE AID OF MARXISM-LENINISM, MAO TSETUNG THOUGHT INTO A CORRECT LINE CAPABLE OF ADVANCING THE STRUGGLE, AND,
- 3) TAKING THIS LINE BACK TO THE MASSES, PROPAGATING IT BROADLY, AND LEADING THE STRUGGLE ON THIS BASIS.

ALL THREE OF THESE STEPS ARE INDISPENSIBLE; WITHOUT ANY ONE OF THEM THE MASS LINE CEASES TO EXIST AND THE REMNANT WHICH REMAINS IS USELESS OR EVEN COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE. LET US EXAMINE EACH OF THESE THREE COMPONENTS IN MORE DETAIL.

"THE MASS LINE MEANS, FIRST OF ALL, RELYING ON THE MASSES OF PEOPLE IN THE STRUGGLE..." (PARTY PAMPHLET ON THE MASS LINE, P. 1) THE MASS LINE IS BASED ON FAITH IN THE MASSES, ON RELIANCE AND TRUST IN THE MASSES AND THEIR IDEAS. THIS IS THE STARTING POINT OF THE MASS LINE METHOD. THIS "FAITH" IS NOT A RELIGIOUS OR MYSTICAL FAITH, AS THE PARTY PAMPHLET POINTS OUT, BUT DERIVES FROM THE REAL MATERIAL SITUATION THE MASSES FIND THEMSELVES IN. THE CLASSES AND STRATA WHICH COMPOSE THE MASSES ARE IN FACT OPPRESSED AND EXPLOITED, AND THE CLASS OF PROLETARIANS MOST OF ALL. ONE OF THE FUNDAMENTAL PROPOSITIONS OF HISTORICAL MATERIALISM IS (AS WE MENTIONED EARLIER) THAT "SOCIAL BEING DETERMINES CONSCIOUSNESS." THE SOCIAL BEING OF THE PROLETARIAT (AND OTHER SECTIONS OF THE MASSES, FOR THE MOST PART, AND TO ONE DEGREE OR ANOTHER) IS ONE OF VICIOUS EXPLOITATION AND OPPRESSION, AND THEIR IDEAS REFLECT THIS. THIS IS WHY WE ARE ABLE TO BASE OURSELVES ON THE IDEAS AND EXPERIENCES OF THE MASSES.

THE PROGRAMME OF THE RCP STATES THAT: "ONE OF THE MOST BASIC PRINCIPLES OF THIS REVOLUTIONARY SCIENCE IS THAT THE MASSES ARE THE MAKERS OF HISTORY AND THAT CORRECT IDEAS ARISE FROM AND IN TURN SERVE THE STRUGGLE OF THE MASSES OF PEOPLE. THE MASSES, IN THEIR MILLIONS, IN THEIR DAILY EXPERIENCES IN CLASS STRUGGLE, IN PRODUC-

TION AND IN SCIENTIFIC EXPERIMENTATION OF ALL KINDS, AMASS GREAT BUT SCATTERED AND UNSYSTEMATIC KNOWLEDGE." (P. 59) IN OTHER WORDS THE MASSES HAVE CORRECT IDEAS BECAUSE THEY PARTICIPATE IN THESE THREE BRANCHES OF SOCIAL PRACTICE. "WHERE DO CORRECT IDEAS COME FROM? DO THEY DROP FROM THE SKIES? NO. ARE THEY INNATE IN THE MIND? NO. THEY COME FROM SOCIAL PRACTICE, AND FROM IT ALONE; THEY COME FROM THREE KINDS OF SOCIAL PRACTICE, THE STRUGGLE FOR PRODUCTION, THE CLASS STRUGGLE AND SCIENTIFIC EXPERIMENT. IT IS MAN'S SOCIAL BEING THAT DETERMINES HIS THINKING." (MAO, "WHERE DO CORRECT IDEAS COME FROM?", MAY 1963, SELECTED READINGS, P. 502.) THE MASSES ARE A VAST REPOSITORY OF CORRECT IDEAS, OF WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE, ESPECIALLY AS CONCERNS IMMEDIATE QUESTIONS OF THE DAY, PRECISELY BECAUSE THE OVERWHELMING PROPORTION OF ALL SOCIAL PRACTICE IS CARRIED OUT BY THE MASSES. THIS IS WHY MAO SAYS: "THE MASSES ARE THE REAL HEROES, WHILE WE OURSELVES ARE OFTEN CHILDISH AND IGNORANT, AND WITHOUT THIS UNDERSTANDING IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO ACQUIRE EVEN THE MOST RUDIMENTARY KNOWLEDGE." (QUOTATIONS, P. 118; "PREFACE AND POSTSCRIPT TO RURAL SURVEYS", MARCH & APRIL 1941, SW, VOL. III, P.12.)

BUT HAVING RECOGNIZED THIS WE MUST MOVE TO THE OTHER ASPECT OF THE DIALECTIC INVOLVED HERE--THE KNOWLEDGE AND IDEAS OF THE MASSES, WHILE GREAT, ARE SCATTERED AND UNSYSTEMATIC. "IN THEIR EVERYDAY LIFE WORKERS POUR THEIR SWEAT INTO PRODUCTION AND, IN CAPITALIST SOCIETY, EXPERIENCE THE LIFE-KILLING EXPLOITATION ON WHICH THE SYSTEM IS BUILT. THEY TAKE PART IN STRUGGLES, TOGETHER WITH FELLOW WORKERS AND OTHERS, AGAINST THE ABUSES AND OUTRAGES OF THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM. EACH WORKER PERCEIVES A PART OF THE REALITY OF CAPITALISM, BUT NONE BY HIMSELF CAN GRASP THE OVERALL PICTURE, FULLY DISCOVER THE SOURCE OF HIS OPPRESSION OR GRASP THE LAWS OF NATURE AND SOCIETY THAT DETERMINE THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CLASS STRUGGLE.

"IN ORDER TO BECOME CONSCIOUS OF ITSELF AS A CLASS, AND TO KNOW AND CHANGE THE WORLD IN ACCORDANCE WITH ITS REVOLUTIONARY INTERESTS, THE WORKING CLASS MUST HAVE THE LEADERSHIP OF ITS OWN POLITICAL PARTY, A PARTY THAT TAKES PART IN AND LEADS THE BATTLES OF THE WORKING CLASS AND ITS ALLIES AGAINST THE CAPITALIST RULERS AND CONSISTENTLY POINTS THE WAY FORWARD TOWARD THE GOAL OF OVERTHROWING THE RULE OF CAPITAL, BUILDING SOCIALISM AND ADVANCING TO COMMUNISM." (PROGRAMME OF THE RCP, P. 53.)

WHY IS THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE MASSES SO SCATTERED, PARTIAL AND UNSYSTEMATIC? WE NEED ONLY MENTION A FEW OF THE REASONS, SUCH AS THAT WORKERS ARE KEPT CHAINED TO THE JOB FOR LONG HOURS, AND WHAT FREE TIME THEY DO HAVE IS OFTEN NECESSARY TO RECOUP THEIR PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL STRENGTH FOR THE NEXT DAY'S WORK; THAT IN ADDITION EVERY EFFORT IS MADE BY THE BOURGEOISIE TO KEEP THE TRAINING AND EDUCATION NECESSARY FOR SUCH SCIENTIFIC INVESTIGATION OF SOCIETY OUT OF THE HANDS OF THE OPPRESSED; AND THAT THE ALL-PERVADING BARRAGE OF BOURGEOIS IDEOLOGY OF COURSE HAD ITS EFFECT ON THE IDEAS OF THE MASSES. IT IS FOR THESE REASONS THAT THE THEORY OF SCIENTIFIC SOCIALISM IS LARGELY THE CREATION OF THE RADICALIZED BOURGEOIS INTELLIGENCIA AND NOT OF THE WORKERS THEMSELVES. (SEE LENIN, WHAT IS TO BE DONE?, CHAPT. 2.) ALL OF THESE DIFFICULTIES CAN BE OVERCOME--BECAUSE THE BASIS EXISTS IN THE MATERIAL LIFE OF THE PROLETARIAT TO GRASP AND UTILIZE A SCIENTIFIC UNDERSTANDING OF ITS SITUATION AND TASKS--BUT THEY CAN ONLY BE OVERCOME UNDER THE ORGANIZED LEADERSHIP OF THE MOST FAR-SEEING AND CONSCIOUS REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PROLETARIAT, NAMELY THE PROLETARIAN PARTY. AND THE PRINCIPLE METHOD WHICH THE PARTY USES TO ACCOMPLISH THIS IS NONE-OTHER THAN THE APPLICATION OF THE MASS LINE.

THIS BRINGS US TO THE SECOND OF THE THREE ELEMENTS OF THE MASS LINE--CONCENTRATING THE SCATTERED AND UNSYSTEMATIC IDEAS OF THE MASSES WITH THE AID OF MARXISM-LENINISM, MAO TSETUNG THOUGHT INTO A CORRECT LINE CAPABLE OF ADVANCING THE STRUGGLE. THIS ELEMENT OF THE MASS LINE IS DESCRIBED BY THE PARTY PROGRAMME IN THE FOLLOWING WORDS: "IT [THE PARTY] TAKES THESE SCATTERED AND PARTIAL EXPERIENCES AND IDEAS, AND BY APPLYING THE SCIENCE OF REVOLUTION, SUMS THEM UP, CONCENTRATES WHAT IS CORRECT, WHAT CORRESPONDS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIETY AND WILL MOVE THE CLASS STRUGGLE AHEAD." (PP. 59-60.)

IN CONNECTION WITH THIS ELEMENT OF THE MASS LINE WE MUST FIRST CONSIDER WHAT IS MEANT BY THE "IDEAS AND EXPERIENCES OF THE MASSES." THE MASSES CONSIST OF THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE WITHIN ANY COUNTRY, LOCALITY, INDUSTRY, WORKPLACE OR UNIT WE CONSIDER. THEY DO NOT, OBVIOUSLY, COMPRISE AN HOMOGENOUS GROUP, EACH IDENTICAL TO ANY OTHER. INSTEAD THE MASSES ARE COMPOSED OF DIFFERENT CLASSES (PRINCIPALLY THE PROLETARIAT, OF COURSE) OR PARTS OF CLASSES, DIFFERENT STRATA AND GROUPS WITHIN CLASSES, AND MANY DIVERSE INDIVIDUALS WITHIN THE GROUPS AND STRATA. SOCIAL BEING DETERMINES CONSCIOUSNESS--BUT THE SOCIAL BEING OF TWO DIFFERENT PEOPLE IS SELDOM IF EVER COMPLETELY IDENTICAL. FURTHERMORE THERE ARE WIDE DIFFERENCES IN EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE. ALL THESE THINGS CONTRIBUTE TO DIFFERENCES IN PEOPLE'S IDEAS AND OUT-LOOK, EVEN AMONG MEMBERS OF A SINGLE CLASS, IN A SINGLE AREA, IN A SINGLE WORKPLACE--EVEN IN A SINGLE FAMILY. THIS IS WHY "THE MASSES IN ANY GIVEN PLACE ARE GENERALLY COMPOSED OF THREE PARTS, THE RELATIVELY ACTIVE, THE INTERMEDIATE AND THE RELATIVELY BACKWARD." (MAO, "SOME QUESTIONS CONCERNING METHODS OF LEADERSHIP," SW, VOL. III, P. 118.)

EVERY INDIVIDUAL HAS HIS OR HER STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES AND THE MASSES TOO HAVE THEIR SHORTCOMINGS, BOTH AS A TOTALITY AND DISPERSED AMONG THEM. THE MASSES ARE, AS WE SAID BEFORE, A VAST REPOSITORY OF CORRECT IDEAS, OF WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE. BUT THEY ARE ALSO A VAST REPOSITORY FOR INCORRECT IDEAS AND FALSE "KNOWLEDGE" WHOSE SOURCE IS THE BOURGEOISIE, THEIR SYSTEM, AND THE CONDITIONS OF LIFE THEY FORCE ON THE MASSES. "LIVING WITHIN CAPITALIST SOCIETY, AND CAUGHT UP IN THESE CONTRADICTIONS, THE 'SPONTANEOUS' IDEAS OF THE MASSES ARE SCATTERED, UNSYSTEMATIC AND CONTRADICTORY. THERE ARE THE CORRECT IDEAS WHICH STEM FROM THE POSITION OF THE WORKING CLASS IN PRODUCTION, ITS SOCIALIZATION, AND ITS STRUGGLE AGAINST EXPLOITATION AND OPPRESSION. AND THERE ARE INCORRECT IDEAS WHICH STEM FROM THE IDEOLOGY AND PROPAGANDA OF THE BOURGEOISIE BUT WHICH ALSO FIND A BASIS IN THE WORKER'S EXPERIENCE IN CAPITALIST SOCIETY, WHICH FORCES COMPETITION AMONG THE WORKERS, MAINTAINS A 'DIVISION OF LABOR', ETC." (RCP PAMPHLET ON THE MASS LINE, P. 3.)

THE TASK THEREFORE IS NOT SIMPLY TO GATHER THE DISPERSED IDEAS OF THE MASSES, BUT, FOLLOWING THAT, TO "CONCENTRATE WHAT IS CORRECT, WHAT CORRESPONDS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIETY AND WILL MOVE THE CLASS STRUGGLE AHEAD," WHILE DISCARDING WHAT IS INCORRECT. "THE MASS LINE DOES NOT MEAN THAT THE PARTY'S POLICIES SIMPLY AMOUNT TO HOLDING UP A MIRROR TO THE LEVEL OF CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE MASSES AT ANY TIME. 'WHATEVER THE MASSES ALREADY UNDERSTAND, THAT IS THE MASS LINE, THAT IS WHAT WE SHOULD GIVE BACK TO THEM'--SUCH IS A DISTORTION OF THE MASS LINE AND A DENIAL OF THE PARTY'S ROLE AS THE VANGUARD OF THE WORKING CLASS, ITS LEADERSHIP IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST CAPITALISM. THIS AMOUNTS TO GIVING UP THE GOAL OF REVOLUTION AND PERPETUATING THE CONDITIONS OF SLAVERY FOR THE WORKING CLASS." (IBID., P. 3.)

HOW THEN DOES THE REVOLUTIONARY LEADERSHIP SORT THROUGH THE VAST AND CONTRADICTORY VIEWS OF THE MASSES, DISCARD THE ERRONEOUS AND IRRELEVANT AND CONCENTRATE THE CORRECT AND VITAL WISDOM OF THE MASSES INTO A CORRECT LINE CAPABLE OF GENUINELY ADVANCING THE STRUGGLE? THIS IS DONE BY APPLYING THE SCIENCE OF SOCIETY AND REVOLUTION, WHICH IS MARXISM-LENINISM, MAO TSETUNG THOUGHT. "THE EXPERIENCE OF THE MASSES, ESPECIALLY THE MASS OF WORKERS, IS THE RAW MATERIAL FOR CORRECT LINES AND POLICIES. BUT IT IS NOT THE FINISHED PRODUCT, THE CORRECT LINE ITSELF. TO DEVELOP THIS CORRECT LINE REQUIRES THE APPLICATION OF MARXISM-LENINISM TO 'PROCESS' THE IDEAS GAINED BY THE MASSES THROUGH THEIR EXPERIENCE. IT IS THIS THAT THE PARTY MUST RETURN TO THE MASSES AND PERSEVERE IN PROPAGATING AND CARRYING OUT." (IBID., P. 4, *ITALICS IN ORIGINAL.*)

BUT WHAT CAN IT MEAN TO "APPLY" MARXISM-LENINISM, MAO TSETUNG THOUGHT TO THE IDEAS OF THE MASSES, OR TO "PROCESS" THEIR IDEAS BY MEANS OF IT? DOES IT REALLY ALL BOIL DOWN TO REPLACING THE IDEAS OF THE MASSES WITH OUR OWN? OR IS IT SIMPLY LOOKING FOR WHAT WE WANT TO HEAR AMONG THE MASSES AND, WHEN WE FIND IT, SEIZING UPON IT TO JUSTIFY WHAT WE ALREADY WANT TO DO? NOT AT ALL! "THE MASS LINE IS NOT A GIMMICK. IT IS NOT A QUESTION OF 'TAKING THE POSITIVE AND GETTING RID OF THE NEGATIVE' OR BUILDING UP WHAT THE COMMUNISTS 'LIKE' AND KNOCKING DOWN THE IDEAS THEY

DON'T LIKE." (IBID., P. 4)

THE MASS LINE IS GENUINELY BASED ON THE IDEAS OF THE MASSES WHICH WE AS REVOLUTIONARY LEADERS STRIVE TO CONCENTRATE INTO A CORRECT LINE BY ANALYZING CONCRETELY WHAT THE VARIOUS IDEAS OF THE MASSES WILL MEAN IF USED AS THE FOUNDATION FOR ACTION BY THE MASSES. DO WE COMPARE THE IDEAS OF THE MASSES WITH COMMUNIST IDEAS TO SEE IF THEY ARE CONSISTENT? OF COURSE! BUT THIS IS NOT THE ESSENCE OF THE MATTER AS FAR AS USING THE MASS LINE IS CONCERNED.

THE THEORY OF MARXISM-LENINISM, MAO TSETUNG THOUGHT HAS DEVELOPED THROUGH THE SCIENTIFIC ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION AND EXPERIENCES OF THE PROLETARIAT IN CLASS STRUGGLE OVER A PERIOD OF CENTURIES. DURING THIS PERIOD MANY GENERAL PROPOSITIONS HAVE COME TO BE SO WELL ESTABLISHED (PROVEN) THAT THERE CAN BE NO QUESTION OF ABANDONING THEM BECAUSE OF THE CONTRARY IDEAS OF EVEN A LARGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE AT A PARTICULAR TIME AND PLACE. ONLY SERIOUS IGNORANCE OF THE HISTORY OF THE CLASS STRUGGLE AND/OR OPEN AND FLAGRANT OPPORTUNISM COULD RESULT IN SUCH AN EMPIRICIST REVISIONISM. IF, FOR EXAMPLE, WE HEAR A WORKER SAYING THAT WE DON'T HAVE TO FIGHT THE BOSS OR THE GOVERNMENT BECAUSE THEY ARE REALLY ON OUR SIDE (AS A FEW WORKERS DO BELIEVE) THEN WE KNOW RIGHT OFF THAT HE IS WRONG, BASED ON THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF M-L, MTT. BUT IF WE HEAR OTHER WORKERS ARGUING ABOUT WHETHER THIS IS THE RIGHT TIME TO LAUNCH A STRIKE (OR THE RIGHT TIME TO STORM THE WHITE HOUSE, AS THE CASE MAY BE), OUR GENERAL PRINCIPLES WHICH WE HAVE MOSTLY LEARNED FROM BOOKS CANNOT TELL US WHO IS RIGHT AND WHO IS WRONG. ONLY A STUDY OF THE PRESENT CONDITIONS (IN LIGHT OF THE PRINCIPLES OF M-L, MTT) CAN REVEAL THIS.

NEVER FOR A MOMENT SHOULD WE FORGET THAT "THE LIVING SOUL OF MARXISM IS" (IN LENIN'S PHRASE) "THE CONCRETE ANALYSIS OF CONCRETE CONDITIONS." APPLYING THE MASS LINE IS UNTHINKABLE ON ANY OTHER BASIS.

WHEN, IN THE 1905 REVOLUTION IN RUSSIA, THE MASSES CONCEIVED OF THE SOVIETS AND PROCEEDED TO START ORGANIZING THEMSELVES IN THIS NEW WAY, LENIN AND THE BOLSHEVIKS COULD NOT TURN TO ANY DIRECT REFERENCE IN MARX OR ENGELS TO DECIDE WHETHER THE SOVIET FORM OF ORGANIZATION WAS GOOD OR BAD. BUT THROUGH HIS CONCRETE ANALYSIS OF THIS NEW DEVELOPMENT LENIN SAW THAT THE MASSES HAD BEGUN TO CREATE A NEW TOOL OF INESTIMABLE VALUE FOR THE REVOLUTION, A TOOL WHICH UNDER CORRECT PROLETARIAN LEADERSHIP COULD BE MADE THE BASIS FOR THE SEIZURE OF POWER BY THE PROLETARIAT. THUS AFTER FEBRUARY 1917 WHEN THE MASSES AGAIN BEGAN TO ORGANIZE THEMSELVES INTO SOVIETS THE BOLSHEVIKS ENCOURAGED THIS AND HELPED MOBILIZE THE MASSES TO CARRY OUT THE FORMATION OF THE NEW ORGANIZATIONAL ADVANCE. IT WAS DUE TO THE INITIATIVE OF THE BOLSHEVIKS, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT THE SOVIETS SPREAD TO INCLUDE THE SOLDIERS AS WELL AS THE WORKERS IN THE FACTORIES. (SEE HISTORY OF THE CPBU, 1939, P. 177.) IT WAS, MOREOVER, DUE TO THE MAGNIFICENT USE OF THE MASS LINE BY THE BOLSHEVIKS THAT THE SOVIET FORM OF DUAL POWER WITH THE BOURGEOIS PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT DID NOT FADE OUT AND BECOME SUPPRESSED, BUT RATHER (UNDER SUCH SLOGANS AS "ALL POWER TO THE SOVIETS!") PROVIDED THE ORGANIZATIONAL MEANS AND FOCUS FOR MASS ACTION ON NOV. 7, 1917.

YEARS EARLIER LENIN WROTE SOME WORDS WHICH EXCELLENTLY BRING OUT THE ASPECT OF THE MASS LINE WHICH WE HAVE BEEN DISCUSSING: "MARXISM DIFFERS FROM ALL OTHER SOCIALIST THEORIES IN THE REMARKABLE WAY IT COMBINES COMPLETE SCIENTIFIC SOBRIETY IN THE ANALYSIS OF THE OBJECTIVE STATE OF AFFAIRS AND THE OBJECTIVE COURSE OF EVOLUTION WITH THE MOST EMPHATIC RECOGNITION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE REVOLUTIONARY ENERGY, REVOLUTIONARY CREATIVE GENIUS AND REVOLUTIONARY INITIATIVE OF THE MASSES-- AND ALSO, OF COURSE, OF INDIVIDUALS, GROUPS, ORGANIZATIONS AND PARTIES THAT ARE ABLE TO DISCOVER AND ACHIEVE CONTACT WITH ONE OR ANOTHER CLASS." ("AGAINST BOYCOTT," 1907, CW, VOL. 13, P. 36.)

THE THIRD ELEMENT OF THE MASS LINE IS TO TAKE BACK THE CONCENTRATED IDEAS OF THE MASSES TO THE MASSES, PROPAGATING THEM BROADLY, AND LEADING THE STRUGGLE ON THIS BASIS. WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? BECAUSE (RETURNING TO ONE OF THE FUNDAMENTAL

PRINCIPLES OF HISTORICAL MATERIALISM) IT IS THE MASSES, AND THE MASSES ALONE, WHO ARE THE MAKERS OF WORLD HISTORY. IT IS OF NO USE FOR IDEAS, HOWEVER "CORRECT" THEY MAY BE, TO REMAIN IN THE HEADS OF A FEW INDIVIDUALS WHEN ONLY THE MASSES CAN MAKE USE OF THEM TO CHANGE SOCIETY. AS MARX SAID SO LONG AGO: "THE WEAPON OF CRITICISM CANNOT, OF COURSE, REPLACE CRITICISM BY WEAPONS, MATERIAL FORCE MUST BE OVERTHROWN BY MATERIAL FORCE; BUT THEORY ALSO BECOMES A MATERIAL FORCE AS SOON AS IT HAS GRIPPED THE MASSES." ("CONTRIBUTION TO CRITIQUE OF HEGEL'S PHILOSOPHY OF LAW," WHICH ORIGINALLY APPEARED IN THE DEUTSCH-FRANZÖSISCHE JAHRBÜCHER, 1843; MARX & ENGELS COLLECTED WORKS, VOL. 3, P. 182.)

THIS THIRD ELEMENT OF THE MASS LINE IS SUMMED UP IN THE PROGRAMME OF THE RCP (P. 60) AS FOLLOWS: "THE PARTY RETURNS THESE CONCENTRATED IDEAS TO THE MASSES IN THE FORM OF LINE AND POLICIES, WHICH IT PERSEVERES IN CARRYING OUT AND PROPAGATING IN LINKING ITSELF WITH AND LEADING THE STRUGGLE OF THE MASSES, AND THESE CONCENTRATED IDEAS BECOME A TREMENDOUS MATERIAL FORCE AS THE MASSES TAKE THEM UP AS THEIR OWN AND USE THEM TO TRANSFORM THE WORLD THROUGH CLASS STRUGGLE."

SUCH ARE THE THREE ELEMENTS OF THE MASS LINE. MUCH MORE COULD BE SAID ABOUT THEM BUT WE WILL SAVE SOME POINTS TO BE ELABORATED AND DISPUTED UNTIL LATER IN THESE NOTES. HERE I WOULD JUST LIKE TO CLOSE MY PRESENTATION OF HOW I UNDERSTAND THE MASS LINE WITH SOME COMMENTS ABOUT ITS "SCOPE".

IT SEEMS TO ME THAT SOME PEOPLE IMAGINE THAT THE MASS LINE CONCERNS ONLY LOCAL, SECONDARY, OR EVEN TRIVIAL ISSUES. "BIG" ISSUES ARE ALREADY SETTLED BY MARXIST THEORY. HOWEVER EVEN CRITICAL, LIFE AND DEATH QUESTIONS, AND CENTRAL QUESTIONS OF LINE AND POLICY CAN ONLY BE CORRECTLY DECIDED BY USE OF THE MASS LINE; WHETHER TO LEAD AN INSURRECTION IN JULY OR OCTOBER, FOR EXAMPLE--IF THE PROLETARIAN PARTY IS TO AVOID DISASTER. OR TO GIVE A MORE CONTEMPORANEOUS EXAMPLE, WE HAVE THE EXCELLENT APPLICATION OF THE MASS LINE BY COMRADE AVAKIAN AND THE PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE IN DETERMINING THAT AT THE PRESENT TIME THE "CENTER OF GRAVITY" OF THE WORK OF THE PARTY LIES IN STRUGGLES "AROUND WAGES AND BENEFITS, WORKING CONDITIONS, AGAINST SPEED-UP, LAY-OFFS, COMPULSORY OVERTIME AND OTHER ATTEMPTS BY THE CAPITALISTS TO INCREASE THE EXPLOITATION OF THE WORKERS." (RCP PAMPHLET ON THE MASS LINE, P. 10.) HOW WAS THIS DETERMINED? THROUGH BOOKS? NO; IT IS A CONCENTRATION OF THE PRESENT IDEAS AND EXPERIENCES OF THE MASSES. AND JUST BECAUSE IT IS A CONCENTRATION OF PRESENT IDEAS THERE WILL COME A TIME IN THE FUTURE WHEN IT WILL NO LONGER BE VALID, WHEN THE CENTER OF GRAVITY OF OUR WORK WILL AND MUST BE ELSEWHERE. HOW WE DO OUR WORK NOW WILL HELP SHAPE THESE NEW CONDITIONS.

BUT THERE IS ALSO AN ERROR IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION--TO IMAGINE THAT ONLY QUESTIONS OF LINE AND GENERAL POLICY ARE TO BE DECIDED BY USING THE MASS LINE, AND THAT IT DOESN'T APPLY TO METHODS OF WORK. HOWEVER AN ARROGANT STYLE OF WORK CAN ALIENATE US FROM THE MASSES JUST AS MUCH AS A BASICALLY INCORRECT LINE CAN. WE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT THERE IS A "MASS STYLE" AS WELL AS A MASS LINE, AND THAT BOTH DERIVE FROM THE MASSES. THIS IS TO SAY THAT THE SCOPE OF THE APPLICATION OF THE MASS LINE MUST COVER THE DETERMINATION OF OUR LINE ITSELF AND OUR POLICIES, BUT ALSO OUR METHODS AND STYLE OF WORK.

III. AN ERRONEOUS CONCEPTION OF THE MASS LINE.

IN CHARACTERIZING THE OPPOSING CONCEPTION OF THE MASS LINE I OF COURSE RUN THE RISK OF BEING ACCUSED OF DISTORTING THAT POSITION, OF BEATING A STRAW MAN. I CAN ONLY SAY THAT SINCE THE OTHER SIDE HAS NOT YET SPELLED OUT ITS POSITION IN WRITING I WILL HAVE TO GO ON THE IMPRESSIONS WHICH I HAVE GAINED IN THE COURSE OF NUMEROUS RAMBLING DISCUSSIONS. I WILL WELCOME ANY CORRECTIONS IN THE STATEMENT OF THE OTHER VIEW WHICH MY OPPONENTS CARE TO MAKE.

THERE IS, IN ADDITION, ANOTHER EXTREMELY IMPORTANT SOURCE OF INFORMATION ABOUT THEIR THEORY OF THE MASS LINE--THE IMPLICATIONS OF OUR POLITICAL WORK WHICH HAS BEEN CARRIED OUT UNDER THEIR DIRECTION. THE RESULTS OF OUR WORK AT MUNI PRESENT A TELLING PICTURE OF WHAT SUCH AN ERRONEOUS LINE MEANS IN PRACTICE.

I RECENTLY WROTE A CRITICAL PAPER CONCERNING A PARTICULAR EPISODE IN OUR WORK; SPECIFICALLY I CHARGED THAT IN THIS EPISODE, AS IN OUR WORK IN GENERAL, THE MASS LINE WAS NOT BEING APPLIED. IN THE COURSE OF THAT PAPER I TOOK A COUPLE PAGES TO OUTLINE MY IDEAS ABOUT THE MASS LINE, ESPECIALLY CERTAIN ASPECTS OF IT WHICH I CONSIDERED WERE NOT SUFFICIENTLY APPRECIATED BY OTHER COMRADES IN THE WORK. (THESE COMMENTS HAVE BEEN REPEATED ABOVE--MOSTLY WORD FOR WORD--TOGETHER WITH ADDITIONAL AMPLIFICATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS OF OTHER ASPECTS OF THE MASS LINE WHICH I DID NOT EARLIER REALIZE WERE IN QUESTION.) TO MY SURPRISE THE LEADING COMRADE IN THE WORK (I'LL REFER TO HIM AS "D") REJECTED MY COMMENTS ON THE MASS LINE IN TOTO. HE SAID "THE STATEMENTS HERE [IN MY PAPER] ARE IN FACT WRONG," AND "IT SHOWS BOURGEOIS LOGIC," AND "IT DOESN'T HIT ON WHAT THE MASS LINE IS ALL ABOUT."

FROM THIS TIME ON IT WAS EVIDENT TO BOTH SIDES THAT THERE WERE INDEED TWO MUTUALLY HOSTILE CONCEPTIONS OF THE MASS LINE AT ISSUE, AND NOT JUST DIFFERENCES IN EMPHASIS OR UNDERSTANDING. CONSEQUENTLY WE RECENTLY HAD A DISCUSSION IN THE BRANCH OF THE THEORY OF THE MASS LINE (SOMETHING THAT WAS SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN 6 MONTHS AGO), BASED ON OUR READING OF THE PARTY'S PAMPHLET ON THE MASS LINE, VARIOUS OTHER PARTY DOCUMENTS INCLUDING THE RECENT C.C. REPORT, AND PART OF WHAT IS TO BE DONE? SIGNIFICANTLY NOTHING BY MAO WAS SELECTED BY D. FOR OUR STUDY.

IN THIS SECOND DISCUSSION THE RELEVANCE (II) OF THE PHRASE "FROM THE MASSES, TO THE MASSES" TO THE MASS LINE BECAME A CENTRAL POINT OF DEBATE! I STILL FIND THIS TOTALLY INCREDIBLE. NOTHING SHOWS SO COMPLETELY THE UTTER FAILURE OF D. AND HIS CAMP TO UNDERSTAND WHAT THE MASS LINE IS ALL ABOUT THAN THEIR REJECTION OF THE CONCEPT "FROM THE MASSES, TO THE MASSES" AS BEING IN ANY WAY CENTRAL TO THE MASS LINE. AT THIS MEETING I READ OUT-LOUD THE PASSAGE IN MAO (QUOTED ABOVE, P. 3) WHERE HE DEFINES "FROM THE MASSES, TO THE MASSES" IN TERMS OF THE THREE ELEMENTS OF THE MASS LINE; BUT THIS FAILED TO CAUSE MORE THAN A MOMENTARY SHADOW OF DOUBT TO CROSS D.'S BROW. THIS IS PARTLY TO BE EXPLAINED BY THE FACT THAT D. EXPLICITLY DENIED THAT THESE THREE ELEMENTS MADE UP THE MASS LINE IN OUR EARLIER DISCUSSION. HE FLATLY CALLED THIS IDEA "ERRONEOUS"; AND I BELIEVE HE HAD THIS TRIPARTITE ANALYSIS IN MIND WHEN HE REFERRED TO MY EARLIER PAPER AS SHOWING "BOURGEOIS LOGIC."

IN ADDITION TO THIS TRIPARTITE ANALYSIS, D. FOUND TWO OTHER MAJOR POINTS IN MY EARLIER PAPER TO BE "ERRONEOUS", NAMELY:

- 1) "THE MASS LINE IS THE METHOD OF MOBILIZING THE MASSES TO STRUGGLE AGAINST THE ENEMY AND TO MAKE REVOLUTION," AND,
- 2) "THE ESSENTIAL CORE OF THE MASS LINE IS THE SUMMATION AND CONCENTRATION OF THE IDEAS OF THE MASSES INTO A LINE WHICH IS MOST FULLY CAPABLE OF MOBILIZING THE MASSES AGAINST THEIR ENEMY."

ALTHOUGH D. CLAIMED SEVERAL TIMES THAT THESE THREE ERRONEOUS POINTS CONSTITUTED THE CORE OF MY "MISCONCEPTION" OF THE MASS LINE HE DID NOT GIVE A DETAILED CRITICISM OF EACH NOR REFORMULATE THEM IN A MANNER WHICH HE WOULD VIEW AS CORRECT. THE SECOND POINT ABOVE, HOWEVER, WAS SPECIFICALLY CRITICIZED (AS WERE MY COMMENTS IN GENERAL) FOR PINNING THE MASS LINE EXCLUSIVELY ON THE IDEAS OF THE MASSES, AND NOT THEIR EXPERIENCES, OBJECTIVE SITUATION, ETC. (I WILL GIVE MY ANSWER TO THIS CHARGE LATER ON.)

IT SEEMS TO ME THAT THE CORE OF THE MISCONCEPTION OF THE MASS LINE WHICH IS BEING CHAMPIONED BY THE OTHER SIDE IS THE NOTION THAT CORRECT IDEAS DO NOT COME FROM THE MASSES, BUT RATHER FROM THE VANGUARD PARTY. THEY BELIEVE THAT THE WORKERS ARE NOT CAPABLE OF ORIGINATING IDEAS WHICH CAN ADVANCE THE STRUGGLE (UNLESS IT BE MERELY MINOR QUESTIONS OF TACTICS, ETC.) BUT ONLY OF GRASPING IDEAS PUT FORWARD BY

COMMUNISTS WHICH WHEN THEY ARE GRASPED CAN THEN ADVANCE THE STRUGGLE. I HAVE NOTICED WITH ATTENTIVE INTEREST WHEN COMRADE D. HAS SEVERAL TIMES TRIED TO STRAIGHTEN ME OUT ON WHAT IT "REALLY" MEANS TO HAVE FAITH IN THE MASSES: "TRUE, WE HAVE FAITH IN THE MASSES TO GRASP ADVANCED IDEAS," WERE HIS EXACT WORDS AT THE FIRST OF THE TWO DISCUSSIONS MENTIONED ABOVE (4-17-77), AND THE SAME EXPLANATION OF WHAT IT MEANS TO HAVE FAITH IN THE MASSES WAS REPEATED AT THE SECOND DISCUSSION (ON 6-1-77).

THIS SAME POINT OF VIEW EXPRESSED ITSELF IN D.'S EMPHASIS ON CHAPTER 2 OF LENIN'S WHAT IS TO BE DONE? IN OUR STUDY OF THE THEORY OF THE MASS LINE AND THE TOTAL NEGLECT OF MAO'S WRITINGS ON THE SUBJECT. THERE IS NOTHING IN THIS CHAPTER--OR INDEED IN THE WHOLE OF THIS MAGNIFICENT WORK--WITH WHICH I CANNOT AGREE COMPLETELY. BUT IN D.'S MIND THERE IS A (LOGICAL) CONTRADICTION BETWEEN WHAT LENIN SAYS THERE ABOUT WORKERS NOT BEING ABLE TO SPONTANEOUSLY DEVELOP COMMUNIST IDEOLOGY AND THE NOTION THAT CORRECT IDEAS COME FROM THE MASSES; IN OTHER WORDS D. HAS ATTEMPTED TO PIT LENIN AGAINST MAO AND THE CORRECT VIEW OF THE MASS LINE.

AS WAS POINTED OUT IN THE ABOVE EXPOSITION OF MY UNDERSTANDING OF THE MASS LINE, WHEN THERE IS AN INCOMPATIBILITY BETWEEN THE IDEOLOGY OF M-L, MTT AND THE IDEAS OF THE MASSES WE OF COURSE STAND WITH M-L, MTT. BUT THE MASS LINE IS A TOOL FOR CONCENTRATING THOSE IDEAS OF THE MASSES WHICH ARE CORRECT AND VITAL INTO A LINE CAPABLE OF ADVANCING THE CLASS STRUGGLE. TO PIT LENIN AGAINST MAO, OR THE IDEAS OF M-L, MTT AGAINST THE IDEAS OF THE MASSES, IS TO ABANDON THE MASS LINE COMPLETELY, AND GOES A LONG WAY TOWARD ABANDONING THE MARXIST OUTLOOK COMPLETELY.

HERE THEN IS THE CONTRADICTION WHICH D. AND COMPANY CANNOT RESOLVE: ON THE ONE HAND OUR LEADERSHIP AND ACTIONS SHOULD BE BASED ON M-L, MTT, BUT ON THE OTHER HAND THEY SHOULD BE BASED ON THE IDEAS OF THE MASSES. I HAVE TRIED TO SHOW THAT THIS CONTRADICTION IS BESIDE THE POINT IN THE APPLICATION OF THE MASS LINE. TO THE EXTENT IN WHICH THERE IS A CONTRADICTION BETWEEN THE PRINCIPLES OF M-L, MTT AND THE IDEAS OF THE MASSES WE UNHESITATINGLY SIDE WITH M-L, MTT. BUT THE MASS LINE IS A METHOD OF GOING BEYOND THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES WHICH WE FIND IN BOOKS (NO MATTER HOW UNDENIABLY CORRECT THEY MAY BE), AND ENTERING THE WORLD OF REVOLUTIONARY POLITICS, WHERE DECISIONS MUST BE MADE ABOUT EXACTLY HOW TO LEAD THE MASSES IN STRUGGLE. WE NEED THE PRINCIPLES OF M-L, MTT TO HELP US DO THIS, BUT WE ALSO NEED THE IDEAS OF THE MASSES AS THE "RAW MATERIAL," THE PLACE TO START IN DECIDING WHAT TO DO. WHY, COMRADES, IS THIS SO HARD TO GRASP??

IN OUR MEETING OF 6-1-77 D. LISTED FIVE MAIN POINTS WHICH SHOULD BE DISCUSSED IN SEEKING TO DEVELOP A "CORRECT" CONCEPTION OF THE MASS LINE:

- 1) THE THEORY OF STAGES. [THAT FIRST WE SHOULD DO ECONOMIC WORK, AND ONLY LATER REVOLUTIONARY POLITICAL WORK.]
- 2) THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SUBJECTIVE AND OBJECTIVE.
- 3) ECONOMIC STRUGGLE VS. POLITICAL STRUGGLE.
- 4) THE TASKS OF LEADERSHIP.
- 5) HOW TO DO REVOLUTIONARY WORK IN A NON-REVOLUTIONARY SITUATION.

ALL OF THESE ARE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS IN THEIR OWN RIGHT, BUT THEY ARE WORTH CONSIDERING HERE BRIEFLY BECAUSE D. SEES THEM AS EXPOSING MY "ERRONEOUS" VIEW OF THE MASS LINE. IN FACT, ACCORDING TO D., THESE FIVE POINTS "ALL BOIL DOWN TO THE QUESTION OF THE MASS LINE AND 'DOING STRICTLY MARXIST WORK'." SINCE D. IMAGINES THAT THE MASS LINE (AS I CONCEIVE OF IT) IS OPPOSED TO THE IDEAS OF M-L, MTT, IT IS ONLY SAYING THE SAME THING TO SUGGEST THAT MY VIEW IS OPPOSED TO "STRICTLY MARXIST WORK." HOWEVER I HAVE MAINTAINED FOR A LONG TIME THAT ECONOMISM IS STILL A BIG PROBLEM IN OUR WORK (EVEN IF THE FAILURE TO USE THE MASS LINE IS THE PRINCIPAL CONTRADICTION AT THE PRESENT TIME), AND I HAVE BEEN ALL FOR GREATLY EXPANDING THE PRECIOUS LITTLE "STRICTLY MARXIST WORK" THAT WE DO. (I WILL GIVE SOME EXAMPLES LATER OF HOW THIS "STRICTLY MARXIST WORK" HAS BEEN CONSTANTLY RESISTED BY NONE OTHER THAN D. HIMSELF.) I DON'T AT ALL BELIEVE IN "THE THEORY OF STAGES."⁴ I QUITE AGREE WITH THE PROFOUND ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE LAID DOWN BY THE PARTY CHAIRMAN IN THE LAST C.C. REPORT, AND SPECIFICALLY THAT OBJECTIVE CONDITIONS CAN AND MUST BE CHANGED THROUGH OUR WORK. I BELIEVE THAT ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL WORK MUST BOTH GO FORWARD, RECOGNIZING WHERE THE CENTER OF GRAVITY IS, BUT AT THE

SAME TIME RECOGNIZING THAT REVOLUTIONARY POLITICS MUST ALWAYS BE BROUGHT INTO ECONOMIC WORK AS WELL (KEEPING IN MIND THE THREE OBJECTIVES OF EVERY STRUGGLE). I BELIEVE I CORRECTLY UNDERSTAND THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE MASS LINE TO LEADERSHIP. AND I WHOLE-HEARTEDLY AGREE WITH THE NECESSITY OF DOING REVOLUTIONARY WORK IN A NON-REVOLUTIONARY SITUATION, AS EXPOUNDED BY THE PARTY AND ITS CHAIRMAN IN NUMEROUS DOCUMENTS. BUT COMRADE D. CANNOT UNDERSTAND HOW I CAN REALLY, TRULY TAKE THESE STANDS, GIVEN MY VIEW THAT CORRECT IDEAS ORIGINATE WITH THE MASSES--BUT THIS IS BECAUSE HE HIMSELF HAS A CONCEPTION OF THE MASS LINE WHICH OPPOSES THE VIEWS OF THE MASSES TO THE PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNISM.

THE LEADING COMRADE IN OUR SECTION SAT IN ON OUR APRIL 17TH DISCUSSION OF MY EARLIER PAPER TO HELP CRITICIZE IT. (I'LL REFER TO HIM AS "G".) DURING THE MEETING I RAISED A STRONG CRITICISM OF OUR WORK AMONG THE ACTIVE AND ADVANCED WORKERS (AROUND MAY DAY AND IN GENERAL), POINTING OUT THAT WE CONSISTENTLY "NEGLECTED" TO IDENTIFY OURSELVES AS COMMUNISTS, AND "NEGLECTED" TO MENTION THE ROLE OF THE PARTY--OR EVEN ITS EXISTENCE. EVIDENTLY THIS IS A HIGHLY CONTROVERSIAL IDEA SINCE DESPITE MY PRODDING EVERYONE PRESENT WAS RELUCTANT TO EVEN EXPRESS THEIR OPINION ON THE SUBJECT. G., HOWEVER, DID CLAIM THAT SUCH A CRITICISM WAS "INCONSISTENT" WITH MY PAPER, AND THAT MY PAPER WAS "FILLED WITH CONTRADICTIONS." I SUSPECT THAT G. MEANT THAT MY WHOLE VIEW OF THE MASS LINE WAS INCONSISTENT WITH BRINGING OUT THE ROLE OF COMMUNISTS AND THE PARTY, AND BRINGING FORWARD COMMUNIST IDEAS. ACTUALLY THE SITUATION IS JUST THE OPPOSITE--IT IS ONLY BECAUSE G. & D. THINK THERE IS A CONTRADICTION BETWEEN PROPAGATING COMMUNIST IDEAS AND USING THE IDEAS OF THE MASSES AS THE STARTING POINT OF THE MASS LINE, THAT THEY HAVE COME UP WITH THEIR OWN BASTARDIZED VERSION OF THE "MASS LINE", WHICH IN FACT AMOUNTS TO LITTLE MORE THAN A GIMMICK, A CHECKING WITH THE MASSES ONLY TO SEE IF THEY HAVE CAUGHT ON YET TO THE ADVANCED IDEAS WE ARE TRYING TO GET INTO THEIR HEADS. NO WONDER PEOPLE WITH THIS KIND OF OUTLOOK ARE SO PUT OFF BY A MAN WHO CAN SAY: "THE MASSES ARE THE REAL HEROES, WHILE WE OURSELVES ARE OFTEN CHILDISH AND IGNORANT, AND WITHOUT THIS UNDERSTANDING IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO ACQUIRE EVEN THE MOST RUDIMENTARY KNOWLEDGE." (PREVIOUSLY CITED QUOTE FROM MAO.) COMRADES! WHAT CAN THIS POSSIBLY MEAN IN LIGHT OF YOUR CONCEPTION OF THE MASS LINE??

(A WORRISOME ASIDE: I HAVE CHARGED BOTH MY BRANCH CHAIRMAN AND SECTION LEADER WITH A COMPLETE FAILURE TO UNDERSTAND THE MASS LINE. I DON'T KNOW HOW WIDESPREAD THEIR MISCONCEPTION IS AMONG THE LOCAL PARTY LEADERSHIP. BUT GIVEN THE FACT THAT NO STRUGGLE HAS EMERGED THERE (TO MY KNOWLEDGE) OVER THEIR INTERPRETATION DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE PARTY IS SUPPOSED TO HAVE BEEN UNDERTAKING A SERIOUS CAMPAIGN TO STUDY THE MASS LINE IN RECENT MONTHS, I CANNOT HELP BUT BE SUSPICIOUS THAT THE ERRONEOUS VIEW IS THE GENERAL ONE. I HAVE ALSO NOTICED THAT MANY LOCAL EVENTS INITIATED BY THE PARTY (SUCH AS MAY DAY, INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY, VARIOUS CULTURAL PROGRAMS, ETC.) HAVE SHOWN A DISTINCT TENDENCY TO BECOME SMALLER OVER THE PAST COUPLE YEARS. I AM IN NO POSITION TO EVALUATE OVERALL THE LOCAL WORK OF THE PARTY, AND I REALIZE THERE ARE OBJECTIVE FACTORS SUCH AS THAT SOME CADRE HAVE BEEN RELOCATED ELSEWHERE; BUT I WONDER IF A GENERAL FAILURE TO USE THE MASS LINE MIGHT ALSO BE A PART OF THE EXPLANATION FOR THIS.)

THIS BRINGS US TO ANOTHER POINT--THE QUESTION OF HOW PEOPLE LEARN. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THIS QUESTION AND THE MASS LINE IS GIVEN AN APPROPRIATE HEAVY EMPHASIS IN PARTY WRITINGS, AND OF COURSE THE CONNECTION WAS MADE RIGHT IN THE INITIAL ELABORATION OF THE MASS LINE BY MAO. (SEE QUOTE ON P. 3 ABOVE.) THE RCP PAMPHLET ON THE MASS LINE PUTS IT THIS WAY: "IN ORDER TO DETERMINE THE ROAD FORWARD AND ADVANCE THROUGH THE ROADBLOCKS ON THIS PATH, THE WORKING CLASS, AND ITS PARTY, NEEDS NOT ONE EXPERIENCE, OR A FEW, BUT REPEATED EXPERIENCE. IT IS NOT A QUESTION OF A FEW 'SMART PEOPLE' DRAWING UP A BLUEPRINT FOR 'HOW SOCIETY OUGHT TO BE' AND IMPOSING THIS ON REALITY, BUT OF THE MASSES OF PEOPLE STRUGGLING TO CHANGE THE WORLD AND IN THE PROCESS LEARNING MORE ABOUT IT, AND THE LAWS GOVERNING IT, IN ORDER TO CHANGE IT FURTHER... AND ON, IN AN ENDLESS SPIRAL." (P. 2) D. HIMSELF OFTEN ARGUES THAT THE MASSES LEARN THROUGH THEIR OWN EXPERIENCE, BUT HE USUALLY BRINGS THIS UP TO OPPOSE MY URGINGS THAT MORE ATTENTION BE GIVEN TO MARXIST PROPAGANDA (BELLING REVOLUTION, CONDUCTING

STUDY GROUPS, TALKING ABOUT THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM AND ITS LAWS IN OUR LEAFLETS, ETC.) (WE SEE FROM THIS AGAIN THAT IT IS HIS LINE WHICH AMOUNTS TO OPPOSING "STRICTLY MARXIST WORK" TO MASS ACTIONS--NOT MINE, AS HE CLAIMS.) SINCE D. AND COMPANY HAVE NO NOTION OF THE REAL METHOD OF THE MASS LINE, AND IN FACT OPPOSE THE USE OF THE MASS LINE, THEY CONSEQUENTLY CUT THE HEART OUT OF THE IDEA THAT THE MASSES MUST LEARN THROUGH THEIR OWN EXPERIENCE. D. & CO. DO BELIEVE THE MASSES LEARN THROUGH THEIR OWN EXPERIENCES IN STRUGGLE, ALL RIGHT, (IN FACT THEY CARRY THIS IDEA TO THE EXTREME OF BELITTILING THE IMPORTANCE OF MARXIST PROPAGANDA), AND THEY DO WANT TO LEAD SUCH STRUGGLE--BUT THEY CANNOT DO SO AT ALL EFFECTIVELY BECAUSE THEY FAIL TO APPLY THE MASS LINE. CONSEQUENTLY THE MASSES DO NOT ENGAGE IN MUCH EFFECTIVE STRUGGLE UNDER THEIR LEADERSHIP, AND DO NOT LEARN MUCH EVEN FROM THE STRUGGLE THEY DO ENGAGE IN (SPONTANEOUSLY OR OTHERWISE). EVEN WORSE, ALL TOO OFTEN THE MASSES END UP "LEARNING" WHAT THE BOURGEOISIE WANTS THEM TO "LEARN" FROM THEIR EXPERIENCES--SUCH AS THAT IT DOESN'T PAY TO FIGHT BACK, THAT YOU CAN'T EVER WIN ANYWAY, THAT OTHER WORKERS ARE OUR ENEMIES, THAT THE UNION HACKS KNOW BEST AFTERALL AND THAT THESE "COMMUNISTS" (CONCERNED MUNI DRIVERS) WILL ONLY LEAD YOU DOWN A BLIND ALLEY, ETC.

I'M NOT SAYING THAT ALL MUNI DRIVERS BELIEVE THESE THINGS, BUT SOME DO AND IT IS AT LEAST PARTLY OUR FAULT THAT THEY DO. THE SECOND ARTICLE IN THE PARTY PAMPHLET ON THE MASS LINE HAS THIS TO SAY ABOUT THE FIRST: "THIS ARTICLE STRESSED THAT, ON THE ONE HAND THE MASSES OF WORKERS MUST LEARN THROUGH THEIR OWN EXPERIENCE--AND NOT JUST ONE OR A FEW, BUT MANY, REPEATED EXPERIENCES--THE LAWS GOVERNING THE ACTUAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRUGGLE; AND THAT, ON THE OTHER HAND THE PROLETARIAT--THROUGH ITS PARTY--MUST ALSO WAGE REPEATED STRUGGLE WITH THE BOURGEOISIE IN THE IDEOLOGICAL SPHERE 'OVER HOW TO SUM UP THE STRUGGLE, WHAT LESSONS TO DRAW FROM EACH BATTLE AND WHAT ROAD TO TAKE IN ORDER TO CHANGE WITH THE SITUATION.'" (P. 6)

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SECOND POINT HERE IS TOTALLY LOST ON D. AND COMPANY, AT LEAST IN PRACTICE--WHATEVER THEY MAY SAY VERBALLY. IN THE PAST COUPLE YEARS MUNI DRIVERS HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN ALL KINDS OF BATTLES, NONE OF WHICH HAVE BEEN ADEQUATELY SUMMED UP FOR THE MASSES, AND MANY OF WHICH HAVE NOT BEEN SUMMED UP AT ALL! LAST YEAR, FOR EXAMPLE, DRIVERS HONORED THE PICKET LINES OF STRIKEING CITY CRAFT WORKERS FOR 38 DAYS AND WHEN THEY DID COME BACK FELT VERY GOOD ABOUT WHAT THEY HAD DONE FOR A FEW DAYS UNTIL THE BOURGEOIS SUMMATION THAT THE STRIKE WAS "ALL FOR NOTHING" AND THAT WE HAD BEEN "USED" BY THE CRAFT WORKERS WAS ADOPTED BY THE MAJORITY OF THE DRIVERS. AND NO WONDER IT WAS ADOPTED SINCE WE PUT OUT NO PROLETARIAN SUMMATION TO COUNTERACT THE RAMPANT BOURGEOIS LINE. IT IS ONLY NOW, A YEAR LATER THAT MUNI DRIVERS ARE REALLY BEGINNING TO RECOVER FROM THAT IDEOLOGICAL DEFEAT; AND IN THE MEANTIME CONDITIONS FOR STRUGGLE AND RAISING DRIVERS POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS HAVE BEEN UNNECESSARILY DIFFICULT. IT IS ALSO SIGNIFICANT THAT OUR ONCE HIGHLY INFLUENTIAL CAUCUS NEWSPAPER WAS ABANDONED WELL OVER A YEAR AGO, EVEN THOUGH SUCH A NEWSPAPER PROVIDES AN EXCELLENT FORUM FOR PROLETARIAN VIEWS, ANALYSIS AND SUMMATION.

COMRADE D. HAS OPENLY ADMITTED THAT OUR ABILITY TO MOBILIZE THE MASSES OF DRIVERS (ON ANY ISSUE) HAS FALLEN DRASTICALLY OVER THE PAST YEAR OR SO. I POINTED OUT IN MY EARLIER PAPER THAT THIS IS PRIMA FACIE EVIDENCE THAT THE MASS LINE HAS NOT GENERALLY BEEN APPLIED IN OUR WORK. BUT D. HAS ANOTHER EXPLANATION--"OBJECTIVE CONDITIONS": "IN CONSIDERING THE RESULTS OF OUR WORK WE MUST DISCUSS THE MATERIAL CONDITIONS...WHAT WE ARE FACING IS NOT UNIQUE." (QUOTED FROM OUR MEETING OF 6-1-77. D. HAS EXPRESSED THIS SAME IDEA ON MANY OTHER OCCASIONS.) I DARE SAY IT ISN'T UNIQUE IF D.'S MISCONCEPTION OF THE MASS LINE PREVAILS ELSEWHERE. I AM FRANKLY SUSPICIOUS OF "EXPLANATIONS" FOR THE FAILURE OF POLITICAL WORK BASED ON FACTORS--BEYOND-OUR-CONTROL, "MATERIAL CONDITIONS", AND THE LIKE. OF COURSE THESE THINGS DO OCCUR, BUT THERE IS SOMETHING OF THE AIR OF EXCUSE-MAKING ABOUT SUCH PLEADING.

IT SEEMS TO ME THAT OUR OWN WORK IS THE FIRST PLACE TO LOOK FOR THE EXPLANATION OF SUCCESSES AND FAILURES ALIKE, AND IF YOU RESORT TO EXPLANATIONS LIKE "CHANGED OBJECTIVE CONDITIONS" YOU'D BETTER BE PREPARED TO SAY EXACTLY WHAT THESE ADVERSELY CHANGED OBJECTIVE CONDITIONS ARE. D.'S ATTEMPTS AT PROVIDING THIS "ANALYSIS" ARE

RIDICULOUS AND FASCINATING AT THE SAME TIME. I WISH I COULD PROVIDE EXACT QUOTES, BUT AS NEAR AS I CAN REMEMBER THERE ARE TWO VERSIONS OF THIS ANALYSIS, ONE OF WHICH GOES SOMETHING LIKE THIS: "BECAUSE OF THE PROGRESS AND ADVANCES WE HAVE MADE WE ARE NOW FACED WITH SETBACKS; THE MASSES HAVE BEEN MOBILIZED TO FIGHT BUT THE BOURGEOISIE HAS COUNTER-ATTACKED, ATTACKED THEIR STANDARD OF LIVING AND WORKING CONDITIONS, AND THUS DRIVEN THEM DOWN. AND SO FROM NOW ON IT WILL BE HARDER TO GET THE MASSES INTO MOTION AGAIN." IN OTHER WORDS, SUCCESS BREEDS FAILURE! WHAT AN EXQUISITE CONTRIBUTION TO DIALECTICS! BUT ONE IMMEDIATELY WONDERS IF FAILURE ALSO BREEDS SUCCESS; IF SO WE SHOULD PERHAPS AIM FOR FAILURE IN THE SHORT RUN IN ORDER TO ENSURE VICTORY IN THE LONG RUN. I ALWAYS THOUGHT WE WERE TRYING TO GO FROM ADVANCE TO ADVANCE, STRENGTH TO STRENGTH, VICTORY TO VICTORY, AND THAT CORRECTLY LED STRUGGLES ON A SMALL SCALE MIGHT BE EXPECTED TO LEAD TO EVEN MORE SIGNIFICANT BATTLES ON A LARGER SCALE. D.'S THEORY TURNS REALITY ON ITS HEAD. CORRECT STRUGGLE CREATES FAVORABLE NEW CONDITIONS NOT UNFAVORABLE NEW CONDITIONS. D. LECTURES US ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE OBJECTIVE-SUBJECTIVE DIALECTIC; BUT YOU REALLY HAVE TO WONDER IF HE HAS THE FAINTEST IDEA WHAT THE DISCUSSION IN THE LAST C.C. REPORT WAS ALL ABOUT. THE POINT THERE WAS THAT WE SHOULD OF COURSE PAY ATTENTION TO OBJECTIVE CONDITIONS; BUT THAT WHATEVER OUR OBJECTIVE CONDITIONS ARE, THROUGH OUR WORK THESE CONDITIONS CAN BE MADE MORE FAVORABLE. (BUT OF COURSE THE OTHER SIDE OF THIS IS THAT INCORRECT WORK CAN MAKE THE OBJECTIVE CONDITIONS LESS FAVORABLE. IF YOU ARE IN A POSITION WHERE YOU CAN IMPROVE THINGS YOU ARE IPSO FACTO GENERALLY IN A POSITION WHERE YOU CAN MAKE THINGS WORSE TOO--DEPENDING ON WHAT YOU DO.)

IN THE WORLD TODAY THE FACTORS FOR BOTH WAR AND REVOLUTION ARE INCREASING. THIS IS ALSO TRUE IN THE U.S. IN OTHER WORDS THE OBJECTIVE OR MATERIAL CONDITIONS FOR REVOLUTION (AND OF COURSE MASS STRUGGLE WHICH IS INHERENT TO REVOLUTION) ARE BECOMING BETTER, NOT WORSE. THERE ARE UPS AND DOWNS TO BE SURE; BUT A PROLONGED "DOWN" DURING PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES SIMPLY CANNOT BE BLAMED ON "ADVERSE OBJECTIVE CONDITIONS." TO TRY TO DO SO IS MERELY TO TRY TO COVER UP INCORRECT WORK.

IT IS TRUE, AS THE PARTY CHAIRMAN POINTED OUT IN THE 1976 C.C. REPORT, THAT WE ARE AT THE BEGINNING OF A NEW SPIRAL OF MASS STRUGGLE, AND IT MAY SEEM TO SOME THAT "THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT" HAS DECLINED OVER THE PAST 6 OR 8 YEARS. BUT THIS IS CORRECTLY EXPLAINED AS A FALSE IMPRESSION; THAT THE "MOVEMENT" OF THE LAST SPIRAL WAS, FOR ALL ITS IMPORTANCE, NON-PROLETARIAN FOR THE MOST PART, AND HENCE NOT AS "REVOLUTIONARY" AS IT MAY HAVE SEEMED (EVEN TO ITSELF). FOR THIS REASON THE RISING PROLETARIAN REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT OF TODAY--THOUGH STILL AT THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW SPIRAL--IS AT A HIGHER LEVEL, A MORE ADVANCED STAGE IN THE REVOLUTION, THAN THE EARLIER PERIOD. AND, MOREOVER, THE STRUGGLE OF THE WORKING CLASS ITSELF IS AT A HIGHER LEVEL THAN IT WAS A FEW YEARS AGO. THIS IS A PERIOD OF "GROWING WORKING CLASS RESISTANCE" AS THE C.C. REPORT NOTES. ("SOME POINTS AND QUESTIONS ON REVOLUTIONARY WORK IN A NON-REVOLUTIONARY SITUATION," P. 2.) IT IS TRUE THAT IT IS ALSO A PERIOD "OF SCATTERED STRUGGLES, AND A GREAT DEAL OF CONFUSION", BUT COMPARED TO THE RELATIVE PASSIVITY OF THE WORKING CLASS IN THE POST-WORLD WAR II BOOM YEARS, DURING THE PERIOD IN WHICH THERE WAS NO PROLETARIAN PARTY, THE WORKING CLASS IS ALREADY BEGINNING TO COME ALIVE AND GET INTO MOTION. THE REAL OBJECTIVE CONDITIONS OF THE U.S. CAPITALIST ECONOMY, AS WELL AS THE NEW "SUBJECTIVE CONDITIONS" WHICH RESULT FROM THE REESTABLISHMENT OF THE PROLETARIAN PARTY ARE BOTH IMPELLING THE WORKING CLASS FORWARD INTO INCREASED STRUGGLE WITH THE ENEMY, AND WILL DO SO ALL THE MORE IN THE COMING PERIOD.

WILL THIS ADVANCE BE WHAT MATHEMATICIANS CALL "MONOTONIC", THAT IS, ALWAYS UPWARD WITH SPURTS AND PERIODS OF SLOW ADVANCE ALTERNATING? OR WILL IT EVEN BE A REGULAR MONOTONIC ADVANCE, THAT IS, CONTINUOUSLY MOVING UPWARD AT THE SAME RATE (OR AS IS SOMETIMES SAID, "IN A STRAIGHT LINE")? NO, NEITHER OF THESE. THERE ARE BOUND TO BE PERIODS OF SETBACK, DEFEAT AND RETREAT, DUE TO OBJECTIVE CONDITIONS AND OUR OWN MISTAKES--BOTH IN THE OVERALL STRUGGLE AND IN OUR WORK AT A SINGLE WORKPLACE. BUT THE PRESENT IS A PERIOD OF ADVANCE, NOT RETREAT. AND AT MUMI ALL THE OBJECTIVE CONDITIONS FOR INCREASED CLASS STRUGGLE, ADVANCES IN CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS AND ORGANIZATION, ETC., HAVE BEEN INCREASING FOR SEVERAL YEARS. THE FAILURES IN OUR WORK ARE ALL THE MORE GLARING IN LIGHT OF THIS.

THE OTHER VERSION OF D.'S ANALYSIS OF THE SUPPOSEDLY ADVERSELY CHANGING MATERIAL CONDITIONS GOES SOMETHING LIKE THIS (AGAIN NOT A ^{DIRECT} QUOTE): "THE CAPITALIST ECONOMY IS FALTERING AND WITH IT HAS EMERGED THE CRISIS OF THE CITIES. THE BOURGEOISIE HAS BEEN FORCED TO VICIOUSLY ATTACK MUNI OPERATORS AND DRIVE THEM DOWN, WHICH HAS LED TO DEMORALIZATION AND A CERTAIN TEMPORARY BAPPING OF THEIR WILL TO FIGHT BACK." LET'S CONSIDER THIS THEORY. THERE IS NO DISPUTING THAT THE CAPITALIST ECONOMIC SYSTEM HAS ENTERED A PERIOD OF PROFOUND CRISIS AND THAT THE BOURGEOISIE HAS RESPONDED BY TRYING TO PLACE THE BURDEN OF THE CRISIS ON THE BACKS OF THE WORKERS, INCLUDING MUNI DRIVERS. THIS HAS MEANT INCREASED EXPLOITATION AND OPPRESSION, WITH MANY SUCCESSFUL ATTACKS ON OUR WAGES, BENEFITS, WORKING CONDITIONS, ETC. BUT I THOUGHT THAT OPPRESSION WAS SUPPOSED TO BREED RESISTANCE! IT IS NOT THE ATTACKS ON US WHICH HAVE LED TO DEMORALIZATION, BUT THE DEFEATS, THE LACK OF ORGANIZATION AND UNITY, THE INABILITY OF THE DRIVERS TO SEE ANY SOURCE OF LEADERSHIP TO TAKE ON AND DEFEAT THESE ATTACKS.

BUT WHY HAVE DRIVERS BEEN DEFEATED? WAS IT PREORDAINED? NO! THESE ATTACKS, OR MOST OF THEM (OR AT LEAST SOME OF THEM, FOR CRYING-OUT-LOUD!), COULD HAVE BEEN FENDED OFF. INSTEAD OF DEMORALIZATION AND A SPIRIT OF DEFEAT, DRIVERS COULD BE ADVANCING IN STRENGTH AND CONSCIOUSNESS, GAINING SOME VICTORIES AND BUILDING SOME REAL MASS ORGANIZATION, AND PROVIDING AN INSPIRING EXAMPLE TO THE WHOLE WORKING CLASS IN THE PROCESS. BUT THESE THINGS HAVE NOT BEEN ACCOMPLISHED, AND COULD NOT POSSIBLY HAVE BEEN ACCOMPLISHED WITHOUT USING THE MASS LINE. THIS IS WHY I SAY AGAIN THAT THE ONLY "ADVERSELY CHANGING OBJECTIVE CONDITIONS" OF ANY GREAT SIGNIFICANCE THAT WE ARE PRESENTLY FACING ARE ONES OF OUR OWN MAKING, DUE TO OUR GROSS MISTAKES.

ONE OTHER POINT: IF YOU REALLY THINK THAT THE "ADVERSELY CHANGING MATERIAL CONDITIONS FOR STRUGGLE" WHICH HAVE "RESULTED" FROM THE ATTACKS OF THE BOURGEOISIE ON THE WORKERS ARE A MERE "TEMPORARY" PHENOMENON, YOU HAD BETTER RETHINK THE IMPLICATIONS OF YOUR THEORY. AS FAR AS THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ECONOMIC CRISIS GOES AND THE CONSEQUENT STEADY STREAM OF REALLY VICIOUS ATTACKS ON DRIVERS AND OTHER WORKERS--WE HAVEN'T BEEN NOTHIN' YET! AND IF THE CRISIS AND THE ATTACKS, AND THE "INEVITABLE" DEFEATS AND DEMORALIZATION ARE SOMEHOW AUTOMATICALLY GOING TO PREVENT US FROM MOBILIZING THE MASSES OF DRIVERS AND OTHER WORKERS FROM FIGHTING BACK, WE MIGHT AS WELL GIVE UP RIGHT NOW, AT LEAST FOR A PERIOD OF WHO-KNOWS-HOW-MANY YEARS UNTIL THESE "TEMPORARY" ATTACKS HAVE SETTLED DOWN INTO, PERHAPS, FASCIST BARE-SUBSISTANCE CONDITIONS FOR THE WORKERS WHICH ABSOLUTELY CANNOT GO ANY LOWER WITHOUT WORKERS DYING LIKE FLIES TO THE DETRIMENT OF THE BOURGEOISIE ITSELF. COMRADES! YOUR THEORY HAS NOTHING IN COMMON WITH MARXISM.

A LAST MINUTE ADDITION: AT OUR MOST RECENT MEETING (6-11-77) D. EXPRESSED A NEW VERSION OF HIS ANALYSIS OF WHY THE STRUGGLE IS SMALLER AND MORE DIFFICULT NOW THAN IT WAS A COUPLE YEARS AGO, AND THIS TIME I OBTAINED A FEW DIRECT QUOTES: "IT'S TRUE THAT THERE IS A LOT OF DEMORALIZATION AND CYNICISM [AT MUNI]...[BUT] THINGS ARE ON A HIGHER LEVEL THAN TWO YEARS AGO EVEN THOUGH THE STRUGGLE IS SMALLER." "IT'S LOWER NUMERICALLY IN A CERTAIN SENSE, BUT THE BASIS IS THERE FOR A STRUGGLE ON A MUCH HIGHER LEVEL." [WHY?] "...BECAUSE PEOPLE ARE LOOKING TO FIGHT BACK..." "THERE'S HIGHER POLITICAL AND CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS NOW; THEY'VE BEEN TAUGHT SOME LESSONS." "ANY ISSUE WE COME UP AGAINST ON THE JOB...WE'RE NOT GOING TO MAKE ANY PROGRESS UNTIL WE BUILD IT AS A SOCIAL MOVEMENT, LIKE THE INTERNATIONAL HOTEL FIGHT." THIS MEANS WE MUST FIRST WAGE "AN ALL-OUT WAR AGAINST ECONOMISM" IN OUR OWN RANKS.

WE HAVE HERE A GREAT NEW EXCUSE FOR WHY THINGS DON'T SEEM TO BE GOING SO GOOD AT MUNI. A "SOCIAL MOVEMENT", YOU SEE, CANNOT BE BUILT AT A SINGLE WORK PLACE, IT REQUIRES MOBILIZING BROAD SECTIONS OF THE WORKING CLASS IN A GIVEN AREA (MAYBE EVEN NATIONALLY!), AND PROBABLY SECTIONS OF OTHER CLASSES AND STRATA BESIDES. THIS NATURALLY IS NOT THE EXCLUSIVE RESPONSIBILITY OF US COMRADES AT MUNI--AND SO, THANK GOD!, WE ARE OFF THE HOOK!

---THE STRUGGLE IS "LOWER NUMERICALLY, IN A CERTAIN SENSE" BUT AT A HIGHER LEVEL NEVERTHELESS "BECAUSE PEOPLE ARE LOOKING TO FIGHT BACK". BUT DRIVERS HAVE BEEN

UNDER CONSTANT ATTACK FOR SEVERAL YEARS NOW AND THEY HAVE ALWAYS WANTED TO FIGHT BACK. THE QUESTION IS--AND ALWAYS WAS--HOW CAN THIS BE DONE? IT IS THIS THAT THE DRIVERS OVERALL DID NOT SEE BEFORE AND STILL DO NOT SEE TODAY (DESPITE THE FACT THAT AMONG THE DRIVERS RIGHT NOW ARE THE IDEAS WHICH CAN BEGIN TO ANSWER THIS QUESTION.) "THERE'S HIGHER POLITICAL AND CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS NOW; THEY'VE BEEN TAUGHT SOME LESSONS..." IS THERE REALLY? LAST YEAR DRIVERS GAVE AN IMPRESSIVE SHOW OF SUPPORT FOR THE STRIKING CRAFT WORKERS, STAYING OUT 36 DAYS (WITHOUT EFFECTIVE PROLETARIAN LEADERSHIP, TOO). BUT AFTERWARDS THEY CAME TO ACCEPT THE BOURGEOIS SUMMATION OF THIS EXPERIENCE--THAT THEY HAD BEEN "USED" BY THE CRAFT WORKERS, THAT IT WAS "ALL FOR NOTHING" AND EVEN THAT THE ONLY RESULT WAS TO BRING DOWN HARSHER ATTACKS ON THE DRIVERS THEMSELVES. IN WHAT WAY, EXACTLY, HAS CONSCIOUSNESS BEEN RAISED AT MUNI? ---WELL, WE HAVE BEEN UNDER SEVERE ATTACK...---THIS IS ALL YOU CAN SAY, COMRADES. ALTHOUGH I DON'T EXPECT HIM TO SAY SO IN SO MANY WORDS, D. REALLY BELIEVES THAT TIME AND INVOLVEMENT IN STRUGGLE AUTOMATICALLY SUCCEED IN RAISING PEOPLE'S CONSCIOUSNESS. DRIVERS HAVE BEEN THROUGH A LOT, "THEREFORE" CONSCIOUSNESS HAS BEEN RAISED. THIS THEORY IS NOTHING BUT ECONOMISM, PURE AND SIMPLE. THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF MUNI DRIVERS AS PART OF THE WORKING CLASS, WHOSE INTERESTS ARE THE SAME AS OTHER MEMBERS OF THAT CLASS, HAS NOT ADVANCED OVER THE PAST YEAR. IF ANYTHING IT HAS DECLINED; AND IT IS TO OUR SHAME THAT WE BEAR A VERY LARGE PART OF THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THIS. PEOPLE DO LEARN THROUGH THEIR OWN EXPERIENCES, BUT NOT ALWAYS WHAT WE WANT THEM TO LEARN--ESPECIALLY IF WE MAKE NO SERIOUS EFFORT TO HELP THEM SUM UP THEIR EXPERIENCES FROM A PROLETARIAN VIEWPOINT.

I TRIED TO DRAW D. OUT A LITTLE MORE IN HIS NEW "ANALYSIS." "DOES THIS MEAN WE'RE NOT GOING TO WIN ANY REAL BATTLES AT MUNI UNTIL WE BUILD UP THE STRUGGLE BEYOND MUNI?", I ASKED. "YES," HE REPLIED. "WHAT ABOUT STRUGGLES LIKE THE BILLY RAY SMITH CASE?", I ASKED. (THIS IS A DRIVER WHO MUNI IS TRYING TO FIRE BECAUSE OF AN INCIDENT FOUR YEARS AGO WHEN HE INJURED A PASSENGER IN SELF-DEFENSE.) D. AGREED THAT THIS SORT OF THING MIGHT BE AN EXCEPTION, THAT WE COULD HOPE TO WIN SOME THINGS LIKE THIS BY SIMPLY (1) MOBILIZING MUNI DRIVERS. BUT IN GENERAL NOT MUCH CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED JUST AT MUNI.

LAST YEAR WE TRIED TO HELP WIN THE CITY CRAFT WORKERS STRIKE BY WORKING WITH THE CRAFT WORKERS THEMSELVES AND (TO AN EXTENT) TRYING TO MOBILIZE THE WORKING CLASS TO SUPPORT THE STRIKE. THESE WERE IMPORTANT AND NECESSARY THINGS, BUT WE SUMMED UP AFTERWARDS THAT OUR MAIN WORK SHOULD HAVE BEEN WITH MUNI DRIVERS, INVOLVING THEM IN THE STRIKE, RAISING THEIR CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE PROCESS, ETC. IN OTHER AREAS TOO, SUCH AS THE STRUGGLES AGAINST RUN CUTS, WE HAVE A HISTORY OF CONCENTRATING OUR ATTENTION ON MOBILIZING THE PUBLIC MORE THAN MUNI DRIVERS THEMSELVES. BUT NOW EVIDENTLY WE ARE TO SUPPOSE THAT THIS "LOOKING BEYOND MUNI" IS THE CORRECT APPROACH. I SUSPECT THE REAL THINKING BEHIND THIS IS SOMETHING LIKE: WE HAVEN'T SUCCEEDED IN MOBILIZING THE MASSES OF MUNI DRIVERS; IN ORDER TO REALLY DO SO WE "FIRST" HAVE TO MOBILIZE THE BROAD MASSES, AND THEN SURELY THE DRIVERS WILL COME ALONG. TO ME THIS SEEMS ASS-BACKWARDS. OUR TASK IS TO MOBILIZE MUNI DRIVERS RIGHT NOW, AND THIS CAN BE DONE IF THE RIGHT METHOD (THE MASS LINE) IS USED. IT IS TRUE THAT NO MATTER HOW WELL ORGANIZED MUNI DRIVERS ARE AND HOW HIGH THEIR CONSCIOUSNESS IS, MANY IMPORTANT BATTLES CANNOT BE WON WITHOUT BROADENING THE STRUGGLE TO THE WHOLE WORKING CLASS AND BEYOND--AND OF COURSE THIS APPLIES WITH INCREASED EMPHASIS IN THE BIGGEST BATTLE OF ALL--REVOLUTION. IT IS, FURTHERMORE, EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO CONSTANTLY MAKE GREAT EFFORTS TO LINK UP THE STRUGGLES AT MUNI WITH OTHER WORKERS AND THE STRUGGLE OF THE WHOLE CLASS, AS A MEANS OF STRENGTHENING ALL THE STRUGGLES, AND OF RAISING CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS, ETC. BUT WE CANNOT FORGET FOR A MOMENT THAT OUR PRIMARY TASK, AS CADRE WORKING AT MUNI, IS TO MOBILIZE MUNI DRIVERS THEMSELVES, TO WORK WITH THEM TO RAISE THEIR CONSCIOUSNESS AND ORGANIZATION. WE SHOULD NOT UNDERRATE THE GREAT POWER THAT 1800 DRIVERS HAVE WHEN THEY ARE FULLY AROUSED AND IN ACTION. MANY EXTREMELY IMPORTANT BATTLES AT MUNI CAN BE WON PRIMARILY BY MOBILIZING MUNI DRIVERS THEMSELVES. AND CASES LIKE BILLY RAY SMITH'S SHOULD NOT BE SEEN AS TRIVIAL EXCEPTIONS BUT AS CRUCIALLY IMPORTANT TYPICAL BATTLES (AT LEAST DURING THE PRESENT PERIOD WHEN WE ARE TRYING TO GET ON OUR FEET AGAIN). EVEN THE EXTENSION OF KEY STRUGGLES BEYOND MUNI DEPENDS

IN THE FIRST PLACE UPON THE MOBILIZATION, ORGANIZATION, UNITY AND CONSCIOUSNESS OF MUNI DRIVERS THEMSELVES. TO SAY THAT WE CAN'T GET "ANYWHERE" AT MUNI UNTIL WE BUILD AN OVERALL SOCIAL MOVEMENT IS A DANGEROUSLY INCORRECT IDEA, A COP-OUT, AND ANOTHER COVER-UP FOR THE DISASTROUS RESULTS OF FAILING TO USE THE MASS LINE.

AS I MENTIONED ABOVE IT IS GENERALLY ADMITTED BY ALL COMRADES IN THE WORK THAT OUR ABILITY TO MOBILIZE THE MASSES ON ANY ISSUE HAS FALLEN DRASTICALLY OVER THE PAST YEAR OR TWO. FOR BRINGING THINGS LIKE THIS UP I AM ACCUSED OF "WORSHIPPING NUMBERS," CONSIDERING ONLY QUANTITY AND NOT QUALITY, ETC.

IT IS OF COURSE TRUE THAT IN LEADING THE MASSES YOU HAVE TO START SOMEWHERE, AND THAT CAN'T BE WITH EVERYONE IN MOTION RIGHT FROM THE BEGINNING. EVEN WHEN THE WORK HAS BEEN UNDERWAY FOR A LONG TIME SOME ISSUES WILL GRIP THE MASSES MORE THAN OTHERS AND LEAD TO DIFFERENT LEVELS OF STRUGGLE--DUE TO THE VARYING CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE MASSES ON DIFFERENT ISSUES AND FOR OTHER REASONS. EVEN THE SAME ISSUE WILL LEAD TO DIFFERENT LEVELS OF STRUGGLE AT DIFFERENT TIMES--NOT ALWAYS GREATER STRUGGLE AS TIME PASSES. BUT IF WORK IS BEING DONE CORRECTLY THERE SHOULD BE A GENERAL TREND TOWARD LARGER NUMBERS BEING BROUGHT INTO MOTION--CERTAINLY NOT TOWARD FEWER NUMBERS.

ARE LARGE NUMBERS REALLY IMPORTANT? WELL WE KNOW THE MASSES ARE THE MAKERS OF WORLD HISTORY. ONE WONDERS WHO THE MASSES ARE (LET ALONE THE "BROAD MASSES") IF THEY ARE NOT LARGE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE. ISN'T IT STRANGE THAT SOME PEOPLE SEE NO CONNECTION BETWEEN APPLYING THE "MASS" LINE AND MOBILIZING LARGE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE? OF COURSE AS WE NOTED BEFORE, WHAT CONSTITUTES THE MASSES AND THUS WHAT CONSTITUTES LARGE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE, VARIES WITH THE CONTEXT. IN CONSIDERING A FACTORY OF 100 PEOPLE IT MEANS SOMETHING DIFFERENT THAN WHEN CONSIDERING THE BAY AREA OR THE WHOLE COUNTRY.

THE PARTY PAMPHLET ON THE MASS LINE (WHICH I SOMETIMES WONDER IF HAS EVEN BEEN READ BY THE OTHER SIDE IN THIS DISPUTE) EMPHASIZES THE IMPORTANCE OF LARGE NUMBERS IN SEVERAL PLACES. FOR EXAMPLE, "...THE PARTY OF THE WORKING CLASS MUST BASE ITSELF ON THE EXPERIENCE AND THE STRUGGLE OF THE MASSES BROADLY--AND NOT ON THAT OF A FEW INDIVIDUALS." (P. 3) THIS IDEA IS EVEN MORE SHARPLY EXPRESSED ON PAGE 7 WHERE WE FIND:

"THERE ARE MANY CASES WHERE INITIALLY THE STRUGGLE WAS DEVELOPING IN A BIG WAY, MORE AND MORE PEOPLE WERE COMING FORWARD, TAKING INITIATIVE, GRASPING MATTERS INTO THEIR OWN HANDS, GIVING ACTIVE EXPRESSION IN BATTLE TO THEIR DEEP HATRED FOR THE CLASS ENEMY, BUT AT A CERTAIN POINT THE LEADING FORCES SUBSTITUTED THEIR OWN 'GOOD IDEA' FOR A SCIENTIFIC APPLICATION OF THE MASS LINE IN DETERMINING THE NEXT STEP-- AND WHAT WAS THE RESULT?

"THE RESULT WAS INEVITABLY THAT THE MOMENTUM BUILT UP WAS LOST--AT LEAST TEMPORARILY--THE INITIATIVE OF THE MASSES DAMPENED, THE HAND OF THE ENEMY WAS STRENGTHENED AND THE ADVANCED FORCES BECAME ISOLATED. WHERE YESTERDAY HUNDREDS, SOMETIMES EVEN THOUSANDS, WERE IN MOTION, NOW ONLY A SMALL NUMBER REMAIN ACTIVE. WHERE BEFORE THE MASSES WERE GAINING IN THEIR CONSCIOUSNESS AND SENSE OF ORGANIZATION, NOW THEY BECAME CONFUSED, DEMORALIZED AND DIVIDED." AND AS THE PARTY CHAIRMAN SUMMED THIS UP, "I THINK WE'VE LEARNED ALOT ABOUT THE FACT THAT AT ANY GIVEN POINT IF OUR TACTICS DEVIATE FROM THE MASS LINE...YOU CAN GO FROM VERY BIG TO VERY SMALL VERY FAST." ("FURTHER REMARKS...", P. 7, MY EMPHASIS.) BUT PERHAPS SOCIAL LAWS WORK DIFFERENTLY AT MUNI THAN IN THE REST OF THE COUNTRY AND THE WORLD.

WHAT DO THE GREAT MARXISTS HAVE TO SAY ON THIS POINT? THERE ARE INNUMERABLE PLACES WHERE THEY EMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF INVOLVING LARGE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE IN STRUGGLE. CONSIDER, FOR EXAMPLE, THIS PASSAGE FROM LENIN'S 1897 WORK "THE HERITAGE WE RENOUNCE" WHERE HE FIRST QUOTES MARX AND THEN ADDS SOME COMMENTS OF HIS OWN:

"WITH THE THOROUGHNESS OF THE HISTORICAL ACTION, THE SIZE OF THE MASS WHOSE ACTION IT IS WILL THEREFORE INCREASE." ["THE HOLY FAMILY", MARX & ENGELS CW, VOL. 4 P. 82.]--THESE WORDS EXPRESS ONE OF THE PROFOUNDTEST AND MOST IMPORTANT PRECEPTS OF THAT HISTORICO-PHILOSOPHICAL THEORY WHICH OUR NARODNIKS WILL NOT AND CANNOT UNDERSTAND. AS MAN'S HISTORY-MAKING ACTIVITY GROWS BROADER AND DEEPER, THE SIZE OF THE MASS OF THE POPULATION WHICH IS THE CONSCIOUS MAKER OF HISTORY IS BOUND TO INCREASE." (LENIN, CW, VOL. 2, P. 524.)

LENIN EVEN SAYS, IN ANOTHER PLACE: "THE MILLIONS-STRONG MASSES--AND POLITICS BEGIN WHERE MILLIONS OF MEN AND WOMEN ARE: WHERE THERE ARE NOT THOUSANDS, BUT MILLIONS, THAT IS WHERE SERIOUS POLITICS BEGIN--THE MASSES KNOW WHAT THE ARMY IS LIKE, THEY HAVE SEEN SOLDIERS RETURNING FROM THE FRONT. THEY KNOW--THAT IS, IF YOU TAKE, NOT INDIVIDUAL PERSONS, BUT REAL MASSES--THAT WE CANNOT FIGHT, THAT EVERY MAN AT THE FRONT HAS ENDURED EVERYTHING IMAGINABLE. THE MASSES HAVE REALIZED THE TRUTH THAT IF WE HAVE NO ARMY, AND A PREDATOR IS LYING BESIDE US, WE SHALL HAVE TO SIGN A MOST HARSH, HUMILIATING PEACE TREATY." ("EXTRAORDINARY SEVENTH CONGRESS OF THE R.C.P.(B.)", MARCH 1918, CW, VOL. 27, PP. 99-100.) LENIN WAS DEALING WITH A SITUATION HERE WHERE MANY BOLSHEVIK LEADERS WANTED TO CONTINUE WORLD WAR I AGAINST GERMANY RATHER THAN ACCEPT A HUMILIATING, PREDATORY TREATY. THEY ARGUED ON THE BASIS OF SOME PEOPLES' DESIRE TO CONTINUE THE WAR THAT THE MASSSES WANTED TO CONTINUE FIGHTING. LENIN POINTS OUT HERE THAT THE REAL MASSES ARE THE GREAT MAJORITY NOT THE RELATIVE HANDFUL (EVEN IF THIS "HANDFUL" CONSTITUTES MANY THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE). WE SHOULD BE CLEAR ON ONE POINT HERE, HOWEVER. LENIN IS NOT ARGUING (AND NEITHER AM I) THAT NOTHING MATTERS UNTIL WE CAN MOBILIZE MILLIONS OF PEOPLE. AT MUNI, FOR EXAMPLE, EFFECTIVE ACTION REQUIRES THE MOBILIZATION OF DOZENS, OR HUNDREDS, OR AT MOST 1800 DRIVERS, DEPENDING ON THE PARTICULAR STRUGGLE, THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF THE ISSUE TO THE ENEMY, ETC. (OF COURSE MANY STRUGGLES, ESPECIALLY THE BIGGEST ONES, ALSO REQUIRE MOBILIZING SUPPORT BEYOND MUNI AS WELL. SEE ABOVE.)

NUMBERS ARE NOT IMPORTANT?? LENIN HAD THIS TO SAY ABOUT THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION: "IN THIS CIVIL WAR THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION PROVED TO BE ON OUR SIDE, AND THAT IS WHY VICTORY WAS ACHIEVED WITH SUCH EXTRAORDINARY EASE." (IBID., P. 88) AND AGAIN, "THE WHOLE HISTORY OF WARS OF LIBERATION SHOWS THAT WHEN THESE WARS INVOLVED LARGE MASSES LIBERATION CAME QUICKLY." (IBID., P. 106.) THESE STATEMENTS ARE FROM JUST ONE OF LENIN'S SPEECHES; THERE ARE UNTOLD NUMBERS OF SIMILAR QUOTES THROUGHOUT ALL HIS WRITINGS--AND THIS IS WITHOUT EVEN TURNING TO MAO WHOSE VIEWS ON THE MASS LINE SOME PEOPLE DO NOT WANT TO HEAR.⁵

--HISTORY IS MADE BY THE MASSES, BUT MOBILIZING A LOT OF PEOPLE IS NOT THAT IMPORTANT AND CANNOT BE DONE ("AT LEAST AT THIS EARLY STAGE", AS IT IS USUALLY QUALIFIED). THIS IS INDEED A PUZZLE. FOR D. AND COMPANY HOWEVER IT PRESENTS NO DIFFICULTIES SINCE FOR THEM "THE MASSES" DOESN'T NECESSARILY MEAN A LARGE PROPORTION OF THE PEOPLE--IN FACT IT DOESN'T SEEM TO HAVE TO MEAN ANY PEOPLE AT ALL. AS THEY SEE IT, ONE OR TWO PEOPLE CAN "REPRESENT" THE MASSES.

LAST FALL FOR EXAMPLE, D. AND HIS FELLOW MINDED PRACTITIONERS OF THE "MASS LINE" CONSULTED WITH EACH OTHER (BUT NOT THE MASSSES, OF COURSE) AND CAME UP WITH A PROGRAM FOR COMBATTING A CITY BALLOT MEASURE WHICH WOULD TAKE AWAY THE RIGHT OF MUNI DRIVERS AND OTHER CITY WORKERS TO STRIKE. ONE OF THE IDEAS WAS TO HOLD A PRESS CONFERENCE OF MUNI DRIVERS TO DENOUNCE THE MEASURE, PRESUMABLY FOR THE PURPOSE OF GETTING SOME PUBLICITY IN THE BOURGEOIS MEDIA AND SHOWING THE DRIVERS THAT "WE"--UNLIKE (?) THE UNION HACKS--WERE "DOING" SOMETHING ABOUT THE BALLOT ATTACK. THE DRIVERS HOWEVER WERE NOT BEHIND THE IDEA AND NOT ONE DRIVER SHOWED UP FOR THE CONFERENCE EVEN THOUGH IT WAS HELD RIGHT AT A MUNI BARN. THOSE DRIVERS INSIDE, INCLUDING A FEW WHO HAD FORMERLY BEEN ACTIVE WITH CONCERNED DRIVERS, REFUSED TO COME OUT EVEN TO STAND AROUND BECAUSE THEY DID NOT WANT TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH THE THING. (EVEN THE COMRADES IN THE WORK, EXCEPT FOR MYSELF, WERE NOT THERE BECAUSE THEY WERE WORKING AT THE TIME. ONE OTHER COMRADE WAS AROUND BUT DID NOT TAKE PART IN THE PRESS CONFERENCE.) COMRADE G. AND A FEW OTHER COMRADES AND FRIENDS FROM OTHER INDUSTRIES SHOWED UP IN SUPPORT BUT I WAS THE ONLY DRIVER AT THIS "PRESS CONFERENCE OF RANK AND FILE MUNI DRIVERS." EVEN THOUGH A COUPLE REPORTERS SHOWED UP WE DIDN'T

END UP GETTING ANY SIGNIFICANT NEWS COVERAGE (IF WE GOT ANY AT ALL). AND OF COURSE WE COULD NOT HAVE (OR AT LEAST SHOULD NOT HAVE) EXPECTED TO CHANGE THE RESULTS OF THE ELECTION BY THIS SAME KIND OF BURGEOIS ELECTIONEERING THAT THE UNION HACKS USE ANYWAY. MORE TO THE POINT, HOWEVER, WAS THE REACTION OF THE DRIVERS WHO WATCHED THE "PRESS CONFERENCE" OUT THE WINDOW. TALKING TO THESE GUYS LATER SHOWED THAT THEY WERE TOTALLY TURNED OFF BY THE WHOLE THING. "YOU WERE THE ONLY GODDAMN DRIVER THERE!", THEY SAID. (I ASKED WHY THE HELL THEY HADN'T COME OUT AND JOINED IN.) "WHAT GOOD DID IT DO?", THEY DEMANDED. I GAVE OUR OFFICIAL RATIONALE AND ENDED ON THE THEME "WE'RE TRYING TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THIS ATTACK...COME JOIN US...HELP US DEVELOP BETTER IDEAS..." BUT A FEW PLEAS TO THE MASSES FROM THE "HEROES" STANDING OUT THERE ALONE ARE NOT GOING TO PROVE VERY EFFECTIVE.

SO WE HAD AN UNSUCCESSFUL PRESS CONFERENCE. SO WHAT? SO...D.&G. INSISTED AFTERWARDS THAT IT WAS "CORRECT" AND "A SUCCESS." A SUCCESS??? DID IT STOP THE BALLOT MEASURE? NO. DID IT EVEN AFFECT THE VOTE IN THE SLIGHTEST? NO. DID IT INSPIRE THE MASSES TO STRUGGLE OR COME FORWARD IN ANY WAY? NO. IT DID ALIENATE US FURTHER FROM THE WORKERS THAT SAW IT, AND NO DOUBT THOSE THEY TOLD ABOUT IT. IT DID ALIENATE US FROM THE ADVANCED WORKERS WHO REFUSED TO TAKE PART IN IT, ONE OF WHOM LITERALLY WALKED AWAY FROM US IN DISGUST AT THE TIME. AH--BUT IT WAS A SUCCESS, YOU SEE, BECAUSE IT SHOWED SOME DRIVERS THAT "WE ARE FIGHTING BACK." THE WORDS "FOR THEM" SHOULD BE TACKED ONTO THE END OF THAT PHRASE.

THIS IDEA THAT A HANDFUL OR EVEN ONE INDIVIDUAL CAN "REPRESENT" THE MASSES, IN THE SENSE OF ENGAGING IN ACTIVITY ON THEIR BEHALF, IS JUST A CAMOFLAGED VERSION OF THE OLD "HANDFUL-OF-HEROES-HERE-TO-SAVE-THE-MASSES" IDEA. WHAT IS NEEDED TO CHANGE SOCIETY, OR EVEN TO WAGE ANY KIND OF EFFECTIVE STRUGGLE TOWARDS THAT END, IS NOT "REPRESENTATIVES" OF THE MASSES BUT THE ACTION OF THE MASSES THEMSELVES. AND THIS IS TRUE RIGHT FROM THE VERY BEGINNING OF OUR ACTIVITY AMONG THE MASSES.

ONLY WHEN WE BEGIN TO MOBILIZE A FEW PEOPLE WILL WE THEN BE ABLE TO MOBILIZE BROAD NUMBERS. BUT EVEN THE FEW CANNOT BE MOBILIZED (AT LEAST FOR VERY LONG) UNLESS THE MASS LINE IS USED--THAT IS, UNLESS WE BASE OURSELVES ON THE IDEAS OF THE MASSES. BY IGNORING THIS EVEN THE INDIVIDUALS WHO COME FORWARD GRADUALLY BECOME DISILLUSIONED AND DROP BACK, MAKING IT HARDER THAN EVER EVEN TO GET THE PROCESS STARTED AGAIN.

I WOULD LIKE NOW TO ATTEMPT TO SUMMARIZE THE ERRONEOUS CONCEPTION OF THE MASS LINE AS CHAMPIONED BY D. AND COMPANY. THEY HAVE NO NOTION OF THE PLACE OF THE THEORY OF THE MASS LINE METHOD OF LEADERSHIP IN THE BODY OF IDEOLOGY OF M-L, MTT, OF ITS DEVELOPMENT AND HISTORY, OF ITS PRACTICE AND APPLICATION. TO THEM THE MASS LINE SIMPLY MEANS ATTEMPTING TO INCULCATE THE MASSES WITH ADVANCED (COMMUNIST) IDEAS WHILE THEY ARE IN STRUGGLE, CHECKING TO SEE IF THE MASSES HAVE GRASPED THESE IDEAS, AND WHEN THEY HAVE, ADVANCING THE STRUGGLE TO A HIGHER LEVEL BASED ON THESE ADVANCED IDEAS, AND SO ON IN AN ENDLESS SPIRAL. THEY REJECT COMPLETELY THE VIEW THAT CORRECT IDEAS ORIGINATE WITH THE MASSES, OR THAT WE HAVE ANYTHING REALLY TO LEARN FROM THE MASSES (EXCEPT THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE MASSES HAVE LEARNED FROM US). THEY REJECT THE PHRASE "FROM THE MASSES, TO THE MASSES" AS BEING IN ANY WAY CENTRAL TO THE MASS LINE. IN THEIR VIEW THE MASS LINE REALLY AMOUNTS TO THE SAME THING AS "DOING STRICTLY MARXIST WORK", BUT SINCE THEY DO NOT RELY ON THE MASSES AND THUS CONTINUALLY BECOME ALIENATED FROM THE MASSES, THERE IS A CONSTANT TENDENCY--IN SPITE OF THEMSELVES--TO TONE DOWN THEIR "STRICTLY MARXIST" WORK, TO REALLY DO VERY LITTLE OF IT, AND IN FACT TO END UP GIVING IT LITTLE MORE THAN LIP-SERVICE. THOUGH THEY DO NOT THEMSELVES SEE THAT THIS IS WHAT THEY HAVE DONE, THEY HAVE DISTORTED THE MARXIST THEORY OF HOW PEOPLE LEARN THINGS, TURNING IT IN FACT INTO A QUESTION OF COMMUNISTS PREACHING TO THEM, BUT COVERING THIS UP BY LOUDLY INSISTING THAT THIS BE DONE WHILE PEOPLE ARE IN STRUGGLE. THEY HAVE SHOWN THAT THEY DO NOT REALLY BELIEVE THAT THE MASSES ARE THE MAKERS OF HISTORY; INSTEAD BELIEVING THAT A SMALL GROUP CAN SUCCESSFULLY ADVANCE THE STRUGGLE WITHOUT THE MASSES, OR CAN "REPRESENT" THE MASSES IN STRUGGLE. THEY DO NOT BELIEVE 'THE MASSES' NECESSARILY CONSTITUTES A LARGE FRACTION OF THE PEOPLE AT A GIVEN PLACE OR THAT IT IS REALLY NECESSARY TO INVOLVE LARGE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE IN STRUGGLE.

THIS THEORY HAS LED TO COMMANDISM, AND IN DIFFERENT WAYS TO BOTH DOGMATISM AND REVISIONISM (IN THE FORMS OF ECONOMISM AND EMPIRICISM). IT HAS ALIENATED US FROM THE MASSES AND, BECAUSE OF THIS, FROM THE ADVANCED AND ACTIVE WORKERS WHO HAVE COME FORWARD ONLY TO DROP BACK DEMORALIZED AND DISGUSTED. THE WORK AMONG THE DRIVERS HAS BEEN POORLY DONE AND IN GENERAL HAS PRODUCED DISASTROUS RESULTS. OUR ABILITY TO MOBILIZE THE MASSES OF DRIVERS AND PROVIDE LEADERSHIP TO THE STRUGGLE HAS GONE DOWN DRASTICALLY (DESPITE THE INCREASE IN CADRE IN THE WORK), WHICH HAS LED EVEN TO OUR GIVING UP THE ATTEMPT AT LEADERSHIP IN MANY CASES (THE S-D RUNS, NUMEROUS CASES OF DRIVERS BEING HARASSED, ETC.) THE ACTIONS WHICH WE UNDERTAKE ARE ALMOST ALWAYS THE TOKEN EFFORTS OF A HANDFUL, AND--NEEDLESS TO SAY--UNSUCCESSFUL. THESE RESULTS ARE FOR THE MOST PART DENIED AND EXCUSED AND "THEORIES" ARE COOKED UP TO EXPLAIN THEM AWAY. NOTHING IS COUNTED AS FAILURE, AND WHAT IS REALLY FAILURE IS BILLED AS SUCCESS. WHEN EVEN SOME COMRADES HAVE EXPRESSED DOUBTS ABOUT THIS CONTROLLING LINE (WHICH IN MY VIEW HAS NOTHING IN COMMON WITH THE LINE OF THE PARTY), AND HAVE BECOME SOMEWHAT DEMORALIZED AND CYNICAL THEMSELVES, THEY HAVE BEEN POUNCED ON AS THE REASON THINGS ARE NOT GOING WELL. THEORETICAL DEBATE IN OPPOSITION TO THIS ERRONEOUS LINE IS ACCUSED OF CORRUPTING COMRADES AND DISRUPTING THE WORK. SS?

OF COURSE THERE HAVE BEEN SOME ISSUES WHICH HAVE BEEN HANDLED BETTER THAN OTHERS, WHERE OUR LEADERSHIP ACCIDENTALLY APPROXIMATED THE RESULTS OF CONSCIOUSLY USING THE MASS LINE. THE BILLY RAY SMITH CASE IS A CURRENT BRIGHT SPOT IN OUR WORK, FOR EXAMPLE, WITH TREMENDOUS POTENTIAL FOR MOBILIZING THE MASSES AND BEGINNING TO CHANGE OUR OBJECTIVE CONDITIONS AT MUNI IN A FAVORABLE DIRECTION--IF THE RIGHT METHODS OF LEADERSHIP ARE USED. BUT THE OVERALL PICTURE THIS LAST YEAR OR TWO IS NOT VERY PRETTY. TO MY MIND IT IS LONG PAST TIME WHEN THIS ERRONEOUS LINE, CENTERED ON A BASTARDIZED MISCONCEPTION OF THE MASS LINE METHOD OF LEADERSHIP, WAS EXPOSED, CRITICIZED AND STRUCK DOWN ONCE AND FOR ALL.

IV. SOME LOOSE ENDS.

ALTHOUGH THIS PAPER HAS RAMBLED ON TO WHAT IS ALREADY AN EMBARRASSING LENGTH, THERE ARE A FEW TOPICS WHICH HAVE BEEN PASSED OVER LIGHTLY IN THE MATERIAL ABOVE, OR HAVE NOT BEEN RAISED AT ALL, WHICH REALLY DO DESERVE SOME BRIEF DISCUSSION.

A. ADVANCED ACTIONS. THE PARTY PAMPHLET ON THE MASS LINE SAYS: "ALL THAT HAS BEEN SAID, EMPHASIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF UNITING WITH AND CONSTANTLY WINNING OVER AND DEEPENING TIED WITH EVER BROADER NUMBERS IN STRUGGLE, DOES NOT MEAN THAT THE ADVANCED FORCES, LED BY THE PARTY, SHOULD NOT TAKE ADVANCED ACTIONS. ON THE CONTRARY, COMMUNISTS AND ADVANCED WORKERS MUST PLAY A VANGUARD ROLE IN THE PRACTICAL AS WELL AS THE THEORETICAL SPHERE." (P. 8) STATEMENTS SUCH AS THIS HAVE BEEN MISINTERPRETED BY D. AND COMPANY AS JUSTIFYING THE "A-FEW-OF-US-CAN-REPRESENT-THE-MASSES" THEORY DISCUSSED ABOVE. HOWEVER IF YOU READ THE REST OF THIS TWO PARAGRAPH SECTION OF THE PAMPHLET YOU WILL FIND THAT THIS IS NOT AT ALL WHAT IS MEANT HERE:

"IN OTHER WORDS, WHEN IT CORRESPONDS TO THE NEEDS AND DESIRES [NOTE THAT THE PAMPHLET SAYS "AND DESIRES", THE SUBJECTIVE AS WELL AS THE OBJECTIVE] OF THE MASSES, THE ADVANCED FORCES MUST BE BOLD IN TAKING ACTION, ACTION THAT WILL BRING THE REST OF THE MASSES INTO MOTION THEMSELVES [NOTE THIS WELL!], AND MUST NOT WAIT UNTIL ABSOLUTELY EVERYONE IS WILLING TO 'START THINGS'. AGAIN, A PRINCIPLE SUMMED UP BY MAO TSETUNG IS VERY IMPORTANT HERE: 'COMMUNISTS SHOULD CREATE FAVORABLE NEW SITUATIONS THROUGH STRUGGLE'.

"THIS, OF COURSE, DOES NOT MEAN THAT A HANDFUL OF COMMUNISTS AND ADVANCED FORCES SHOULD TRY TO TAKE ON THE ENEMY ALL BY THEMSELVES OR TO ACT AS 'INDIVIDUAL HEROES', SUBSTITUTING THEIR OWN ACTIONS FOR THE STRUGGLE OF THE MASSES [WHICH IS WHAT HAS IN FACT OCCURRED AT MUNI BY AND LARGE], OR INITIATING STRUGGLE THAT THE MASSES DO NOT YET SEE THE NEED TO TAKE UP. BUT SIMPLY BECAUSE AN ACTION OF THE ADVANCED FORCES MAY CREATE CONTROVERSY AND STRUGGLE ABOUT WHETHER IT'S RIGHT OR WRONG, SHOULD BE SUPPORTED OR OPPOSED--THIS DOES NOT IN ITSELF MAKE THE ACTION

INCORRECT. IN FACT, IN MANY CASES JUST SUCH CONTROVERSY AND STRUGGLE IS WHAT IS NEEDED AND IS A VERY GOOD THING, NOT A BAD THING."

THIS CERTAINLY SEEMS CLEAR ENOUGH. IT IS SAYING THAT IN THESE ADVANCED ACTIONS TOO THE MASS LINE MUST BE APPLIED, THAT THEY MUST BE BASED ON THE UNDERSTANDING AND DESIRES OF THE MASSES. AND MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL THE PURPOSE OF THESE ADVANCED ACTIONS IS TO BRING THE MASSES INTO MOTION, SINCE ONLY THEN CAN VICTORY BE ACHIEVED. EVEN IF YOU GIVE LIP-SERVICE AGREEMENT TO THIS VIEW, IF OVER A LONG PERIOD YOUR "ADVANCED ACTIONS" DO NOT SUCCEED IN BRINGING THE MASSES INTO MOTION, THEN THEY ARE SHOWN NOT TO BE "ADVANCED ACTIONS" AFTERALL, BUT MERELY THE MEANINGLESS ACTIVITY OF A HANDFUL OF WOULD-BE SAVIORS OF THE MASSES. COMRADES, WE MUST DRAW A CLEAR DISTINCTION BETWEEN ADVANCED ACTIONS FOR THE PURPOSE OF MOBILIZING THE MASSES, AND FUTILE HEROIC ACTIONS OF THE ISOLATED FEW WHICH ONLY TURN OFF THE MASSES AND BREED DEMORALIZATION AND CYNICISM.

B. THE IDEAS OF THE MASSES VS. THEIR EXPERIENCES AND OBJECTIVE SITUATION. I MENTIONED ABOVE THAT MY VIEW OF THE MASS LINE WAS CRITICIZED BY THE OTHER SIDE FOR UNDULY EMPHASIZING THE IDEAS OF THE MASSES AND NOT THEIR EXPERIENCES AND OBJECTIVE SITUATION. THEY TAKE THIS STAND BECAUSE THEY OPPOSED BASING OUR ACTIONS ON THE IDEAS OF THE MASSES AND THEREFORE NEED ANOTHER FOUNDATION ON WHICH TO BASE OUR ACTIVITIES, SOMETHING WHICH COMMUNISTS DETERMINE AND NOT THE MASSES THEMSELVES.

IN THE DISCUSSION OF MY EARLIER PAPER I AGREED THAT IT IS MORE CORRECT TO SAY THAT "THE ESSENTIAL CORE OF THE MASS LINE IS THE SUMMATION AND CONCENTRATION OF THE IDEAS AND EXPERIENCES OF THE MASSES INTO A LINE WHICH IS MOST FULLY CAPABLE OF MOBILIZING THE MASSES AGAINST THEIR ENEMY." I HAVE UNDERLINED THE TWO WORDS ADDED TO MY ORIGINAL FORMULATION NOT TO SHOW THEIR EXCEPTIONAL IMPORTANCE, HOWEVER, BUT MERELY TO NOTE THE CHANGE. I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THIS CHANGES THE THRUST OF THE STATEMENT, NOR DID IT MAKE THE STATEMENT ACCEPTABLE TO D. IN FACT, DESPITE THE CORRECTNESS OF THIS ADDITION THE MAIN THING HERE IS INDEED THE IDEAS OF THE MASSES! THE EXPERIENCES OF THE MASSES WHICH HAVE NOT BEEN CONSCIOUSLY SUMMED UP, OR AT LEAST WHICH CANNOT BE ADEQUATELY SUMMED UP FOR THE MASSES DURING THE COURSE OF A STRUGGLE, HAVE NO RELEVANCE TO THE MASS LINE. (MY OPPONENTS IN THIS DEBATE MAY WANT TO SEIZE UPON THIS LAST SENTENCE TO SHOW MY "IDEALISM". IF YOU WANT TO COMRADES, GO AHEAD--IN FACT I DARE YOU TO!) THE PARTY PAMPHLET CORRECTLY BRINGS OUT THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE EXPERIENCES OF THE MASSES TO THEIR IDEAS AND THE RELEVANCE OF BOTH TO THE MASS LINE: "THE EXPERIENCE OF THE MASSES, ESPECIALLY THE MASS OF WORKERS, IS THE RAW MATERIAL FOR CORRECT LINES AND POLICIES. BUT IT IS NOT THE FINISHED PRODUCT, THE CORRECT LINE ITSELF. TO DEVELOP THIS CORRECT LINE REQUIRES THE APPLICATION OF MARXISM-LENINISM TO 'PROCESS' THE IDEAS GAINED BY THE MASSES THROUGH THEIR EXPERIENCE. IT IS THIS THAT THE PARTY MUST RETURN TO THE MASSES AND PERSEVERE IN PROPAGATING AND CARRYING OUT." (P. 4) AND IN THE NEXT PARAGRAPH THE PAMPHLET STATES THAT THE PARTY MUST 'PROCESS' "THE IDEAS OF THE MASSES AND RAISE THEIR EXPERIENCE TO RATIONAL KNOWLEDGE" (AND THEN GOES ON TO STATE THAT THE PARTY MUST ALSO ARM THE MASSES WITH THE SCIENCE OF REVOLUTION--IN OTHER WORDS THE MASS LINE IS NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR "STRICTLY MARXIST WORK", BUT NEITHER IS IT THE SAME THING AS STRICTLY MARXIST WORK.) IN HIS WRITINGS ON THE MASS LINE MAO FREQUENTLY SPEAKS EXCLUSIVELY IN TERMS OF THE IDEAS OF THE MASSES--NOT BECAUSE HE DOESN'T "UNDERSTAND" THAT PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCE IS IMPORTANT, BUT BECAUSE HE RECOGNIZES THAT EXPERIENCE MUST FIRST BE RAISED TO THE LEVEL OF CONSCIOUS, RATIONAL KNOWLEDGE BEFORE IT IS OF ANY USE.

C. THE "BASIS" OF THE MASS LINE. IN DISCUSSION OF MY EARLIER PAPER, COMRADE G. POINTED TO A "DISCREPANCY" BETWEEN WHAT I SAID WAS "THE BASIS" FOR THE MASS LINE AND WHAT THE C.C.REPORT SAYS IS "THE BASIS." I WROTE THAT "THE MASS LINE IS BASED UPON FAITH IN THE MASSES, ON RELIANCE AND TRUST IN THE MASSES AND THEIR IDEAS." G. THINKS THAT THIS CAN'T BE CORRECT BECAUSE THE C.C.REPORT SUMMATION SAYS: "[THE MASS LINE] IS THE METHOD TO USE IN RESOLVING THE CONTRADICTION BETWEEN THE INEVITABILITY OF REVOLUTION AND THE FACT THAT TODAY THE BROAD MASSES ARE NOT CONVINCED OF THE NECESSITY OF REVOLUTION. IT IS BASED ON THE FACT THAT INDEPENDENT OF

ANYONE'S WISHES, CAPITALISM INEVITABLY PRODUCES EXPLOITATION, OPPRESSION, CRISIS, AND WAR." THE "SUPERIOR BRAND" OF LOGICAL CRITICISM WHICH SEES THESE TWO STATEMENTS AS OPPOSED TO EACH OTHER WAS LEVELED AT ME ON THE SAME OCCASION WHEN MY VIEW OF THE MASS LINE WAS SAID BY G. TO BE "FILLED WITH CONTRADICTIONS", AND BY D. TO BE "BOURGEOIS LOGIC." AND SO OUR MASTER LOGICIANS HAVE DETERMINED THAT SINCE THE MASS LINE IS BASED ON "A", IT CANNOT BE BASED ON "B". I AM AFRAID, COMRADES, THAT SUCH "LOGIC" IS NOT EVEN GOOD "BOURGEOIS" FORMAL LOGIC, LET ALONE GOOD DIALECTICAL LOGIC. LANGUAGE IS A VERY RICH THING; THAT IS TO SAY, IT IS APPROPRIATELY AMBIGUOUS--OTHERWISE WE COULD NOT COMMUNICATE WITH EACH OTHER. THE PHRASE 'IS BASED ON' HAS MANY DIFFERENT MEANINGS IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS. MOREOVER, EVEN IF USED IN THE SAME SENSE, "X IS BASED ON Y" AND "X IS BASED ON Z" DO NOT NECESSARILY CONTRADICT EACH OTHER. MAYBE X IS BASED ON Y AND Z!

AS A MATTER OF FACT BOTH MY STATEMENT AND THAT OF THE C.C. SUMMATION QUOTED ABOVE ARE CORRECT. IT IS ALSO CORRECT TO SAY THAT:

- 1) THE MASS LINE IS BASED ON THE PRINCIPLES OF HISTORICAL MATERIALISM.
- 2) THE MASS LINE IS BASED ON THE FACT THAT THE MASSES ARE THE MAKERS OF HISTORY. (THIS AND THE NEXT EXAMPLE ARE OBVIOUSLY SPECIFIC CASES OF EXAMPLE NO. 1.)
- 3) THE MASS LINE IS BASED ON THE EXISTENCE OF THE CLASS STRUGGLE. (YOU WILL FIND THIS EXAMPLE, SOMEWHAT ELABORATED, ON P. 1 OF THE PARTY PAMPHLET ON THE MASS LINE.)
- 4) THE MASS LINE IS BASED ON THE EXISTENCE OF A CENTER OF REVOLUTIONARY LEADERSHIP (I.E., THE PARTY).

WE COULD LIST MORE, BUT IT SHOULD BE OBVIOUS THAT THESE STATEMENTS DO NOT CONTRADICT EACH OTHER. IN MOST OF THE ABOVE EXAMPLES 'IS BASED ON' HAS A MEANING SIMILAR TO 'PRESUPPOSES', AND IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT A THEORY SHOULD PRESUPPOSE MORE THAN ONE THING. THE STATEMENT FROM MY EARLIER PAPER, HOWEVER, HAS A MEANING CLOSER TO "THE STARTING PLACE FOR THE MASS LINE IS FAITH IN THE MASSES AND THEIR IDEAS." HOPEFULLY IT WILL NOT BE NECESSARY TO EXPLORE THIS "GREAT ANTINOMY" ANY FURTHER. IT IS IMPORTANT TO RECOGNIZE HOWEVER HOW THIS DEBATE OVER "LOGIC" AROSE; THAT D. & G. DO OPPOSE THE VIEW THAT THE MASS LINE IS BASED ON FAITH IN THE MASSES AND THEIR IDEAS, THAT THIS INDEED IS THE CRUX OF THEIR ERROR.

D. WHAT CONTRADICTION DOES THE MASS LINE RESOLVE? WHILE WE ARE ON THE SUBJECT OF CONTRADICTION AND ALTERNATE CORRECT FORMULATIONS OF STATEMENTS, LET US MENTION SOME DIFFERENT CONTRADICTIONS WHICH USING THE MASS LINE CAN BE CORRECTLY SAID TO RESOLVE:

- 1) "BETWEEN THE INEVITABILITY OF REVOLUTION AND THE FACT THAT TODAY THE BROAD MASSES ARE NOT CONVINCED OF THE NECESSITY FOR REVOLUTION." (THE FORMULATION FROM THE C.C. REPORT QUOTED ABOVE. SEE ALSO P. 2 OF THE PARTY PAMPHLET ON THE MASS LINE.)
- 2) BETWEEN THE OBJECTIVE NECESSITY OF REVOLUTION, AND THE PRESENT NON-REVOLUTIONARY CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE MASSES WHO ARE THE ONLY FORCE CAPABLE OF MAKING REVOLUTION.
- 3) BETWEEN THE LEADERSHIP AND THE LED.
- 4) BETWEEN THE PARTY AND THE MASSES.
- 5) BETWEEN THE GREAT CREATIVENESS AND ORIGINALITY OF THE MASSES, AND THE SCATTERED AND UNSYSTEMATIC NATURE OF THEIR IDEAS.

AGAIN, IT IS POSSIBLE TO COME UP WITH OTHER VARIATIONS, EACH CORRECT OR EXPRESSING A CORRECT ASPECT OF THE WHOLE PICTURE. HOPEFULLY IT WILL NOT BE NECESSARY TO DEBATE ABOUT WHETHER THESE STATEMENTS ARE "OPPOSED" TO EACH OTHER OR NOT.

E. IS PRACTICE ALWAYS PRIMARY OVER THEORY? AS MARXISTS WE RECOGNIZE THAT IN AN OVERALL SENSE PRACTICE IS PRIMARY OVER THEORY. HOWEVER AT TIMES THEORY BECOMES PRIMARY OVER PRACTICE. SUCH A TIME FOR EXAMPLE WAS THE PERIOD IN WHICH THE PARTY WAS FOUNDED IN 1975. SINCE THAT TIME, OF COURSE, THE PRIMACY OF PRACTICE OVER THEORY HAS OBTAINED FOR THE PARTY AS A WHOLE, AND THIS WILL PROBABLY REMAIN TRUE FOR SOME TIME (THOUGH WE CANNOT BE COMPLETELY SURE OF WHAT THE FUTURE MAY HOLD IN THIS REGARD). NEVERTHELESS, WITHIN THE WORK OF CERTAIN BODIES OF THE PARTY, A PARTICULAR LOCAL PARTY BRANCH LET US SAY, AND WITH THE WORK OF INDIVIDUAL COMRADES,

THERE ARE TIMES--EVEN IN THE PRESENT PERIOD--WHEN THE USUAL STATE OF AFFAIRS REVERSES ITSELF AND THEORY BECOMES PRIMARY OVER PRACTICE. SAY FOR EXAMPLE THAT A COMRADE OR GROUP OF COMRADES IS GIVEN RESPONSIBILITY FOR FULFILLING A TASK WHICH THEY HAVE LITTLE UNDERSTANDING HOW TO GO ABOUT DOING. IN THEIR CASE THEORY MOMENTARILY BECOMES PRIMARY, WITH STUDY AND INVESTIGATION COMING TO THE CENTER OF THE STAGE. SIMILARLY THERE MUST BE PERIODS OF SUMMATION WHEN PRACTICE IS RAISED TO THE LEVEL OF THEORY, OR WEIGHED AGAINST EXISTING THEORY. EVERY COMRADE AND PARTY BODY OUGHT TO BE ABLE TO USE THEIR HEADS TO DETERMINE ON THEIR OWN WHICH ASPECT OF THIS DIALECTICAL UNITY IS PRIMARY AT A GIVEN TIME AND SHOULD NOT HAVE TO WAIT FOR DIRECTIONS FROM ABOVE ON THIS SCORE.

FOR YEARS NOW WE HAVE BEEN ENGAGING IN PRACTICE AT MUNI, GOING THROUGH MANY DIFFERENT STRUGGLES AND EXPERIENCES. IN THE COURSE OF ALL THIS PRACTICE DISPUTES AND DIFFERENCES HAVE ARISEN AMONG US, SOME OF WHICH HAVE BEEN RESOLVED AND MANY OF WHICH HAVEN'T. MORE AND MORE ON THE BASIS OF OUR PRACTICE (AND ALSO OUR STUDY, TO A DEGREE) WE HAVE DEVELOPED TWO DIFFERENT POLITICAL LINES ABOUT HOW THE WORK SHOULD BE SUMMED UP AND ABOUT HOW THE WORK SHOULD BE DONE FROM NOW ON. IF EITHER OF THESE TWO DIFFERENT LINES WERE OPENLY AND CONSCIOUSLY OPPOSED TO THE LINE OF THE PARTY IT WOULD BE CORRECT SIMPLY TO DEMAND THAT THE CHAMPIONS OF THAT LINE ADHERE TO DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM, RESERVE THEIR OWN OPINION UNTIL THE APPROPRIATE TIME FOR SUCH QUESTIONS TO BE RAISED AGAIN (PRESUMABLY IN THE PERIOD BEFORE THE NEXT PARTY CONGRESS) AND GET ON WITH THE WORK IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PARTY LINE TO THE BEST OF THEIR ABILITY.

BUT BOTH SIDES IN THIS DISPUTE AMONG COMRADES AT MUNI CLAIM TO UPHOLD THE CORRECT LINE OF THE PARTY AGAINST THE OPPORTUNISTIC DISTORTIONS OF THEIR OPPONENTS. FURTHERMORE THE WORK HAS BEEN HAMPERED BY THE DISUNITY AMONG US, TO AN EVER GROWING DEGREE. AS THE OTHER SIDE (D.) HAS EXPRESSED IT (FROM THEIR BIASED VIEWPOINT), "IT'S TRUE WE ARE NOT OPERATING AS A UNIT; WHAT WE DECIDE IS NOT IMPLIMENTED." ONE COMRADE IS SO UPSET AND DISGUSTED BY THE WAY THINGS HAVE BEEN GOING THAT I AM AFRAID HE MIGHT THINK OF RESIGNING FROM THE PARTY. OTHERS OF US ARE QUITE ANGRY AT EACH OTHER AND EVEN FIND IT DIFFICULT TO WORK COLLECTIVELY. IN THIS SITUATION IT SEEMS CLEAR TO ME THAT A STRUGGLE OVER POLITICAL LINE HAS BECOME THE MAIN TASK OF THIS BRANCH (FOR A TEMPORARY PERIOD); THAT THEORY HAS PRIMACY OVER PRACTICE FOR US AT THE PRESENT MOMENT. IF WE CAN STRUGGLE THIS OUT AND ACHIEVE UNITY AROUND THE LINE OF THE PARTY--CORRECTLY UNDERSTOOD--WE WILL BE ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH MUCH MORE IN OUR WORK THAN IF WE JUST KEEP GOING ON LIKE WE HAVE BEEN.

HOWEVER, THE OTHER SIDE HOLDS THE VIEW THAT WE SHOULD JUST KEEP PLUGGING AWAY AND TRY TO STRUGGLE THIS OUT ON THE SIDE--SOMETHING WE HAVE BEEN FUTILELY TRYING TO DO FOR WELL OVER A YEAR. "THE PRIMARY THING IS TO GET THE WORK GOING," SAID D. (6-1-77), AND THEN HE CORRECTED HIMSELF TO SAY "IT IS GOING." YES, IT IS "GOING", BUT THE QUESTION IS WHERE IS IT GOING? D. HAS LONG LOVED TO FLING THE CHARGE OF "PRAGMATISM" ABOUT. BUT HIS OWN POSITION ON THIS PARTICULAR ISSUE CAN BE CHARACTERIZED IN NO OTHER WAY.

THIS ISSUE WAS RAISED AGAIN AT OUR LAST MEETING (6-11-77) BY COMRADE S., AND COMRADE D. DECLARED THAT THE ORDERS OF THE LOCAL LEADERSHIP ARE THAT PRACTICE IS TO REMAIN PRIMARY WITH US. I DISAGREE WITH THE CORRECTNESS OF THIS, BUT SINCE IT IS AN ORDER I WILL TRY TO GO ALONG WITH IT. IN THE PERIOD SINCE I HAVE BEEN SICK AND HAVE BEEN OFF WORK MY OWN PRACTICE HAS BEEN NEGLIGIBLE. THE EFFORTS I HAVE MUSTERED HAVE MOSTLY BEEN IN THE DIRECTION OF STUDY, ATTEMPTING TO IMPROVE MY FEEBLE KNOWLEDGE OF POLITICAL ECONOMY AND OTHER AREAS OF MARXIST THEORY. FOR SEVERAL WEEKS I HAVE BEEN TRYING TO STUDY THE MASS LINE, AND THESE MONSTROUS NOTES ARE THE RESULTS OF THIS EFFORT. (I APOLOGIZE FOR NOT CONDENSING THESE NOTES INTO A MORE CONCISE AND ELEGANTLY WRITTEN PAPER.) IF I HAD NOT HAD THIS ENFORCED "OPPORTUNITY" (CAUSED BY MY HEALTH) TO WRITE MY PREVIOUS PAPER AND NOW THIS ONE, I DOUBT IF THIS STRUGGLE WOULD BE COMING TO A HEAD FINALLY. WE WOULD NO DOUBT BE CONTINUING IN THE SAME PRAGMATIC MANNER AS WE HAVE BEEN FOR THE PAST YEAR OR TWO--THAT IS, WAGING OUR PROLONGED "THEORETICAL" DEBATE ON THE SIDE, BUT NEVER IN A THOROUGH ENOUGH AND SHARP

ENOUGH MANNER TO GET TO THE ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCES AND RESOLVE THE STRUGGLE ONE WAY OR THE OTHER. THIS CONFIRMS MY BELIEF THAT THE PRESENT (IS TIME) RIPE FOR SERIOUS STRUGGLE WITHIN OUR RANKS, A STRUGGLE WHICH IS NECESSARY IF THERE IS GOING TO BE ANY QUALITATIVE CHANGE IN OUR WORK AT MUNI.

BUT THE OTHER COMRADES IN THE BRANCH DO NOT HAVE THIS SAME ENFORCED OPPORTUNITY AS I PRESENTLY DO TO STUDY AND THINK ABOUT THESE ISSUES. IT IS FOR THEIR BENEFIT, AND IN ORDER FOR THEM TO MAKE A GREATER CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEBATE, THAT THIS THEORETICAL STRUGGLE SHOULD BE ENGAGED IN FAR MORE SERIOUSLY AND INTENTLY THAN HAS SO FAR BEEN THE CASE. I UNDERSTAND THAT SOMEONE IN LOCAL LEADERSHIP IS WRITING A RESPONSE TO MY EARLIER PAPER.⁶ THIS IS FINE, BUT SHOULDN'T THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN THE WORK PLAY A GREATER ROLE IN THE THEORETICAL STRUGGLE CONCERNING THAT WORK?

--FINIS--

(6-14-77)

FOOTNOTES

1. THE TWO MAIN WEAKNESSES IN OUR OVERALL WORK AT MUNI HAVE BEEN ECONOMISM AND THE FAILURE TO APPLY THE MASS LINE. ECONOMISM WAS FOR A LONG TIME THE PRIMARY WEAKNESS, AND IT IS STILL A MAJOR PROBLEM. BUT THE FAILURE TO GRASP AND APPLY THE MASS LINE IS NOW THE PRIMARY WEAKNESS, THE PRINCIPAL CONTRADICTION HOLDING BACK OUR WORK.

2. MAO NOTES IN "A TALK TO THE EDITORIAL STAFF OF THE SHANXI-SUIYUAN DAILY" IN 1948 (SW, VOL. 4, P. 241) THAT THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF CHINA HAD BEEN CARRYING ON MASS WORK FOR OVER TWENTY YEARS AND HAD BEEN TALKING ABOUT THE MASS LINE FOR "THE PAST DOZEN YEARS". THIS WOULD PLACE THE INCEPTION OF THE CONSCIOUS THEORY OF THE MASS LINE AT AROUND 1936; IN OTHER WORDS RIGHT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE YENAN PERIOD. THE FIRST FULL WRITTEN STATEMENT OF THE THEORY OF THE MASS LINE THAT WE HAVE APPEARED IN "SOME QUESTIONS CONCERNING METHODS OF LEADERSHIP" (JUNE 1, 1943, SW, VOL. 3, PP. 117-122), ALTHOUGH THE PHRASE 'MASS LINE' ITSELF IS NOT MENTIONED THERE. ANOTHER STATEMENT OF THE THEORY OF THE MASS LINE APPEARS IN "GET ORGANIZED!" (NOV. 29, 1943, SW, VOL. 3, ESP. P. 158). IN LATER YEARS THERE WERE A GREAT MANY ELABORATIONS OF VARIOUS POINTS OF THE THEORY, RIGHT UP TO THE END OF MAO'S LIFE. AND BEFORE THESE CLASSIC 1943 PRESENTATIONS ASPECTS OF THE THEORY OF THE MASS LINE WILL BE FOUND IN MAO'S EARLIER WRITINGS. (SEE ESPECIALLY "TALKS AT THE YENAN FORUM...", SW, VOL. 3, ESPECIALLY PP. 87 & 88.) EVEN MAO'S 1919 MAGAZINE ARTICLE "THE GREAT UNION OF THE POPULAR MASSES", WRITTEN BEFORE HE WAS A MARXIST, CONTAINS SOME POINTS OF THE MASS LINE, AND ESPECIALLY A GREAT APPRECIATION OF THE NECESSITY OF MOBILIZING THE BROAD MASSES IN STRUGGLE AS THE ONLY WAY TO ACHIEVE VICTORY.

3. ONE SOMEWHAT EPIGRAMATIC EXAMPLE OF THIS FROM LENIN WHICH I FOUND PARTICULARLY STRIKING DOES NOT APPEAR IN THE 45 VOLUME ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE 4TH EDITION OF THE CW PRESENTLY AVAILABLE TO US:

"KEEP IN TOUCH WITH THE MASSES.

"LIVE CLOSE TO THEM.

"KNOW THEIR MOODS.

"KNOW EVERYTHING.

"UNDERSTAND THE MASSES.

"BE ABLE TO APPROACH THEM.

"WIN THEIR ABSOLUTE TRUTH.

"LEADERS MUST NOT BECOME ISOLATED FROM THE MASSES THEY LEAD, OR THE VANGUARD FROM THE WHOLE ARMY OF LABOUR...

"DO NOT FLATTER THE MASSES AND DO NOT BREAK AWAY FROM THEM." (COMPLETE WORKS, 5TH RUSSIAN ED., VOL. 44, PP. 497-8. QUOTED IN THE FUNDAMENTALS OF MARXIST-LENINIST PHILOSOPHY, 2ND REVISED ED., 1974, BY F.V. KONSTANTINOV, ET AL., P. 573.)

4. OF COURSE AS THE C.C. REPORT NOTES, THE "THEORY OF STAGES" SHOULD BE SHARPLY DISTINGUISHED FROM THE CORRECT MARXIST VIEW THAT ALL DEVELOPMENT PROGRESSES THROUGH STAGES.

5. THOSE WHO DO WANT TO LEARN SOME THINGS ABOUT THE MASS LINE FROM MAO WILL FIND INNUMERABLE PLACES WHERE HE SPEAKS OF THE NECESSITY OF MOBILIZING THE "BROAD MASSES", THE "GREAT MAJORITY", THE "OVERWHELMING MAJORITY", AND OTHER SIMILAR EXPRESSIONS. AND OF COURSE THERE IS THIS FAMOUS PASSAGE: "TO LINK ONESELF WITH THE MASSES, ONE MUST ACT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE NEEDS AND WISHES OF THE MASSES. ALL WORK DONE FOR THE MASSES MUST START FROM THEIR NEEDS AND NOT FROM THE DESIRE OF ANY INDIVIDUAL, HOWEVER WELL-INTENTIONED. IT OFTEN HAPPENS THAT OBJECTIVELY THE MASSES NEED A CERTAIN CHANGE, BUT SUBJECTIVELY THEY ARE NOT YET CONSCIOUS OF THE NEED, NOT YET WILLING OR DETERMINED TO MAKE THE CHANGE. IN SUCH CASES, WE SHOULD WAIT PATIENTLY. WE SHOULD NOT MAKE THE CHANGE UNTIL, THROUGH OUR WORK, MOST OF THE MASSES HAVE BECOME CONSCIOUS OF THE NEED AND ARE WILLING AND DETERMINED TO CARRY IT OUT. OTHERWISE WE

SHALL ISOLATE OURSELVES FROM THE MASSES." ("THE UNITED FRONT IN CULTURAL WORK,"
Oct. 30, 1944, SW, VOL 3, P. 236, EMPHASIS ADDED.)

6. IT IS IN ORDER TO GIVE HIM OR HER A BIGGER TARGET THAT I AM STOPPING WORK ON THESE NOTES NOW AND SUBMITTING THEM, RATHER THAN TAKING THE TIME NECESSARY TO REFINED THEM INTO A NICE SHORT ESSAY. I AM AWARE THAT THERE ARE CERTAIN VERY IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF THE MASS LINE, SUCH AS FOR EXAMPLE THE "SINGLE SPARK METHOD", WHICH HAVE NOT BEEN DISCUSSED IN THIS PAPER--DESPITE ITS LENGTH. I DO NOT CLAIM TO HAVE WRITTEN A TREATISE ON THE MASS LINE--MERELY SOME INCOMPLETE NOTES.