Notes on Theory:

Dialectics

Dialectics is a way of looking at, analysing and understanding the world. It is all this but more, Marx said "Philosophers have only tried to understand the world, our aim is to change it". Dialectical materialism (the philosophy behind Marxism) is thus also about bringing about change. All of us have a philosophy (a way of trying to make sense of the events and issues around us) whether we realise it or not. As militants often at the head of struggles, one needs to also be at the forefront of investigating the world around us. We need to know makes it tick. Without a proper outlook, or theory, our practice might be wrong.

todays world, the t.v., newspapers, schools, universities the workplace etc. are all in one way or another controlled and run, in the interest of the rulers. This then leads to the situation where the general ideas, the majority of people have about the world around them that is values and morals, are the ideas of the ruling classes. Examples of this are: competion is natural, a woman's place is at home raising the family, we will one day go to heaven or hell and so on. For this reason activists should always be wary of common sense as a method of finding a way forward, or to understand society and its many conflicts

UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD.

The Dialectic was a tool of understanding used, and futher develop by the founders of Scientific Socialism. They needed the key to unlock the door to understanding the worlds developments. Most people escaped and continue to escape the question by saying everything was the result of God's will. This attitude however would simply not do for the likes of Marx and Engels. Engels commented "There is a place within this system (their dialectical methods) for neither God nor Devil nor immortal soul nor eternal norms of law and morals."

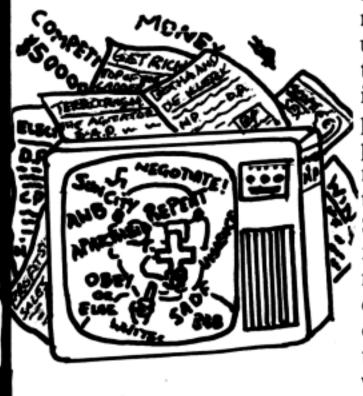
Dialectics shows that it is not a divine being (God) that can make us come to grips with understanding the world. In the begining of humankind, and ignorance pre-dominated. Because people did not know the meaning of things, their first thought was about the Supernatural. Who made the noise of thunder?, who moved the earth during an earthquake?,was lightning caused by an angry god throwing his spear?. That is why, to provide some kind of explanation for natural events, humankind created the gods. The god of rain, fire,

of earth, of sun, the goddess of fertility, the god of hunting etc. In other words it is humankind which made religion, due to a lack of understanding of the world around them. These beleifs in Gods etc, will disappear as people gain real control over their lives and no longer need "The heart in a heartless world" which religion offers to day in this world of oppression and exploitation.



LABOUR

Dilectical understanding is like a movie in relation to a photograph. We are able to gain a far greater insight and learn alot more of a film of events, than a photograph. Dialectics then is the science of the general laws of how things change and develop in the world around us, and in our minds. Now we need to firstly qualify that this dilectical process has a material foundation. By this we mean that the base of life, is the production of our basic needs: food, clothing and shelter.



This fact in one way or another effects all our ideas or values in life. This is true of all classes that make up society. Conflicts in most cases relate then to the spoils of labour.

CAPITAL

Secondly one needs at all times to view the world, conflicts, problems from the points of view of the whole. In much the same way we look at a painting. One stands back from it and gains an overall impression of the artist's work. One may then go closer and look at some aspect which has caught our eye, realising however that it is still part of the picture. In this manner we look at the whole world and see that Capitalism dominates everywhere. From this view it is easy to see that all problems such as wars, poverty, racism, sexism, destruction of the environment, relate back along one path or another to the system of Capitalism.

EVERYTHING CHANGES

Thirdly everything is in process of change, nothing stays the same. People are born, experience youth, maturity and finally death. Likewise hunter gatherer society gave way to class society, in which, feudalism gave way to capitalism. Capitalism which had a begining will by the same logic sooner or later have an end.

CONTRADICTIONS

Many people, the world over are involved in opposition to their rulers and are seeking change. In South Africa this opposition is to Apartheid -Capitalism. People seek to change their present conditions of life to a better one. Dialectics is an understanding of the general laws which govern this process of change or potential for change.

In the language of dialectics the essence of these laws is "Development through Contradictions".

Society only changes as a result of contradictions inside it. It is these contradictions surfacing in conflict between people and classes that moves history forward. Looking now at a concrete example one will be able to see the three aspects of dialects at work in understanding the forces at work in moving history forward.

(1) SIMPLE UNITY

This is when we see the objects or society before any change takes place.

For example Apartheid-Capitalism. This is a class society in which one class exploits another. These two classes are inseparable under Capitalism./In other words you cannot have a racist capitalist without a black worker and likewise black workers created the power of white capital. They are locked together in one system.

(2) THE NEGATION

Now the opposite of a racist capitalist is a black worker in every sense of the word. This is when we see the object or society give rise to its opposite or contradiction. The capitalist is rich the worker is poor. The capitalist are few in number, the black working class is large in number. The capitalist exploits, the worker is exploited. The capitalist uses the rod of racism; Apartheid, the black worker has

consistantly fought against Apartheid and all forms of oppression. The South

African system produces its own gravedigger the Black working class. The fact that the capitalist and the worker are the opposite of one another continually throws them into conflict with each other. From the workers side, conflict is expressed in terms of Trade union activity, strikes, demonstrations etc. The conflict is called class-truggle and is the motor of history.

(3) THE NEGATION OF THE NEGATION.

This is when we see the opposites, or contradiction resolved into a greater unity. This is then in terms of our example is when the heart of the matter, exploitation which is the root of conflict is done away with. In other words when workers through revolutionary social changes create Socialism. The greater unity in this sense is the unity of the means of production created under the law of capital but now controlled by the workers themselves.

The last point of the dialectical process stresses that quantity changes into quality. In the course of struggle the working class is the process emancipating itself. It is changing from downtrodden mass, full of divisions, to a collective in full command. When this happens the future of Humankind liberated, can fully partake in determining its future.

In understanding how things can change, we are in a much better position to fight against the oppression and exploitation we experience.