

Build a Revolutionary Press

Build a Communist Party

Within the last few months conditions in the world have been changing very rapidly. We've seen the main contradiction in the world shifting from that between the imperialists and the colonies to that between the imperialists. We see the U.S. imperialists, faced with a severe economic crisis, shifting the burden onto the working class. We have seen the Nixon administration forced to take more drastic measures such as the wage-price freeze. We know the trade deficit of the U.S. today is greater than ever before in history and the gold reserves have fallen below all previous levels. The internal contradictions of imperialism are intensifying. At the same time the inter-imperialist contradictions are also growing as each imperialist country fights for control of markets. In the colonial world the struggle is heightening everywhere. We read in the newspapers about coups in Bolivia, revolution in the Philippines, and increasing struggle in North Ireland.

What does all this mean? From the standpoint of the bourgeoisie it means capitalism is on its last legs. It means moving more and more rapidly towards establishing fascism, a terroristic dictatorship of the most chauvinistic and reactionary elements of finance capital. Fascism will be the main tactic employed by the bourgeoisie to try and maintain their position.

This crisis of capitalism is in turn demanding more of revolutionaries and communists. From the standpoint of the proletariat, it means we have to move unceasingly ahead toward building an independent class party, a revolutionary communist party that can organize and give political leadership to the mass struggle. Only revolution can stop fascism and liberate the working class, only the act of overthrowing and smashing the bourgeois state.

Revolution is the act of a whole class, of the masses of the people, not just a party. However, it is essential that there be a vanguard detachment of the class to lead the struggle if there is to be a revolution. Never in the history of mankind has there been a revolution without the leadership of a party. Just as an army could not possibly win a war without a general staff, the proletariat cannot carry out a revolution without a vanguard detachment. As the Communist League has correctly pointed out, to defend the proletariat today, means to fight for a communist party.

We must be objective, we must deal with what's before us. And what's before us? An

armed, well organized bourgeoisie and an unarmed, unorganized and divided working class. We cannot afford to let our subjective desires and the pull of the spontaneous movement lead us astray. Our strategy today has to be to build a revolutionary communist party. This is the main blow that has to be struck at the bourgeoisie. This is the first step toward revolution. This has been the direction of the main blow of the Communist League since its inception 3 years ago and everything we do, every decision we make, should be made with this strategy in mind.

The process of building a party means digging deeper and deeper into the proletariat. We must go into the masses and win over the most advanced. Who are the most advanced? They are the most exploited and oppressed, the unorganized, unskilled workers. They have the least bribe, the most class consciousness, and the greatest desire to fight. The minorities, the black and brown workers, along with the least bribed sections of the white workers, are in the main the most revolutionary today. However, we cannot end our analysis here. We have to narrow it down even further. When we speak of recruiting today, of who's going to make up the communist party today, we have to be realistic, we have to realize that only the "most advanced of the most advanced" are ready to join at this stage. The revolutionary press must be aimed mainly at this "most advanced of the most advanced". It may be only 2 or 3 people out of every hundred, but it's these most revolutionary few that we must concentrate on. A communist paper should not be directed at every unsatisfied and grumbling worker. It should raise the political level of the most advanced and revolutionary in order to build a party.

How do we go about winning over these elements? Primarily through education and propaganda, through the communist press. We have to expose the bourgeois line and fight on a nation-wide basis for the line of the proletariat. "The Social-Democrat's ideal should not be a trade-union secretary, but a tribune of the people, able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it takes place, no matter what stratum or class of people it affects; he must be able to group all these manifestations into a single picture of police violence and capitalist exploitation; he must be able to take advantage of every petty event in order to explain his Socialist convictions and his Social-Democratic demands to all, in order to explain to all and everyone the world historical

significance of the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat."¹

As the struggle between the capitalists and the proletariat intensifies, so does the struggle between the bourgeois line and the proletarian line within the revolutionary movement. What are these two lines? One line is a petty-bourgeois--in essence a bourgeois line that says that the political paper should be directed to the masses in general. That a communist paper is too highly theoretical and political and the masses won't understand it. That it should simply be a big leaflet, so that we can build a mass movement. The other line is a Marxist-Leninist--in essence a proletarian line, the line of the Communist League, that says that the paper should be specifically directed to the advanced elements of the most exploited and oppressed section of the working class. That it should be used in distributions and study circles so as to raise the theoretical and political level and recruit the most advanced, so that we can build a communist party that will lead the masses.

The bourgeois tendency we are referring to in the main manifests itself as tailism, a bowing to the spontaneity of the masses. For example, some so-called communists are so busy passing out leaflets calling for reforms that they "don't have time" to teach the proletariat Marxism-Leninism. Others argue that what the proletariat needs is a good left-trade-unionist paper. They often write excellent trade-union papers, but they don't raise the political level of the working class. These "communists" are constantly being drawn completely into the mass movement and forget about building a communist party. This subservience to the spontaneous movement of the masses was long ago exposed by Lenin when he pointed out, "...then the only choice is: Either bourgeois, or Socialist ideology. There is no middle course (for humanity has not created a 'third' ideology, and, moreover, in a society torn by class antagonisms there can never be a non-class or above-class ideology). Hence, to belittle Socialist ideology in any way, to deviate from it in the slightest degree means strengthening bourgeois ideology. There is a lot of talk about spontaneity, but the spontaneous development of the labour movement leads to its becoming subordinated to bourgeois ideology...Hence, our task, the task of Social-Democracy, is to combat spontaneity, to divert the labour movement, with its spontaneous trade-unionist striving, from under the wing of the bourgeoisie, and to

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bring it under the wing of revolutionary Social-Democracy."²

Another example of this bourgeois tendency is the complaint that the level of a communist paper would be "too high", even for the most advanced workers. Isn't this clearly white chauvinism in disguise? Lenin said, "...we (the Russian workers) are not children to be fed on the sops of 'economic' politics alone; we want to know everything that everybody else knows, we want to learn the details of all aspects of political life and to take part actively in every political event. In order that we may do this, the intellectuals must talk to us less on what we already know, and tell us more about what we do not know and what we can never learn from our factory and 'economic' experience, that is, you must give us political knowledge. You intellectuals can acquire this knowledge, and it is your duty to bring us that knowledge in a hundred and a thousand times greater measure than you have done up till now."³

As in Russia, the working class in the U.S. today needs political knowledge, political training and political leadership! We aren't opposed to concrete demands or to reformist work, but it must always be viewed from the standpoint of our strategy. "Revolutionary Social-Democracy always included, and now includes, the fight for reforms in its activities. But it utilises 'economic' agitation for the purpose of presenting to the government, not only demands for all sorts of measures, but also (and primarily) the demand that it cease to be an autocratic government. Moreover, it considers it to be its duty to present the demand to the government, not on the basis of the economic struggle alone, but on the basis of all manifestations of public and political life. In a word, it subordinates the struggle for reforms to the revolutionary struggle for liberty and for Socialism, in the same way as the part is subordinate to the whole."⁴

Our main weapon in carrying out this political education and in party building is the communist press. Its main role in this historical period is as a collective organizer. We've got to use a communist paper to collect or draw together an organization of revolutionaries. And not only to collect, but to build and hold this organization together. Lenin wrote: "The publication of an All-Russian political newspaper must be the main line that must guide us in our work of unswervingly developing, deepening, and expanding this organization (i.e., a revolutionary organization always prepared to support every protest and every outbreak). Pray tell me: When a bricklayer lays bricks in various parts of an

enormous structure, the like of which has never been seen before, is it a 'paper' line that he uses to help him to find the correct place to place each brick, to indicate to him the ultimate goal of the work as a whole, to enable him to use not only every brick but even every piece of brick, which, joining with the bricks placed before and after it, forms a complete and all-embracing line? And are we not now passing through a period in our party life, when we have bricks and bricklayers, but we lack the guiding line, visible to all, by which to guide our movements?

...The whole art of politics lies in finding the link that can least be torn out of our hands, the one that is most important at the given moment, the one that guarantees the command of the whole chain, and having found it, to cling to that link as tightly as possible. If we possessed a staff of experienced bricklayers who had learned to work so well together that they could dispense with a guiding line and could place their bricks exactly where they are required without one (and speaking abstractly, this is by no means impossible), then perhaps we might seize upon some other link. But the unfortunate thing is that we have no experienced bricklayers trained to teamwork, that bricks are often laid where they are not needed at all, that they are not laid according to the general line, and are so scattered about that the enemy can shatter the structure as if it were made not of bricks but of sand. Here is the other comparison:

"A newspaper is not merely a collective propagandist and collective agitator, it is also a collective organizer. In that respect, it can be compared to the scaffolding erected around a building in construction; it marks the contours of the structure, and facilitates communication between the builders, permitting them to distribute the work, and to view the common results achieved by their organized labour. ...at the present time we cannot imagine that the building we require can be put up without scaffolding."⁵ In the U.S. today it is crystal clear that we require this scaffolding, and this scaffolding is the communist press.

From the very beginning the Communist League saw that it was necessary to use a political newspaper as a main tool in building a communist party. What does this mean? That communists must use the paper to raise the theoretical and political level and recruit from the most advanced workers. We learned from our experience that we had to take the hard road. That it wasn't enough to print a political paper, but we had to distribute it amongst the most exploited and oppres-

sed workers in their communities and plants. That it was not enough to distribute it, but we had to take it door to door to make firm contact. That it wasn't enough simply to make contact, but we had to build study circles that use the paper as a tool in connecting the daily struggles of the working class with the general communist line. In short, the road was, and still is, the road of arduous struggle. This is the road that true communists must take.

But there are many "communists" who prefer to take the easy road. They prefer to hide their communism. Why? Because they say a communist paper is too advanced for the masses. That we should sink to the level of the masses and not raise their theoretical and political level. That we should concentrate only on leaflets that strictly deal with the daily struggles of reformism and not link it up with the communist line of revolution. That we should not concentrate on the most advanced of the most advanced section of the working class, but on the masses in general. That we should not, in the final analysis, concentrate on building a communist party, but instead a disjointed, local, mass movement.

Our task is to build a political party. The revolutionary press cannot be a mass paper at this time. It must do one thing: unite the most advanced members of the revolutionary proletariat around a common Marxist-Leninist line and into a communist party that will lead the proletariat forward to Socialism!

(All quotes were taken from What Is To Be Done?, Collected Works of V.I. Lenin, Vol. 4, Book 2, International Publishers.)

- 1) p. 159
- 2) p. 123
- 3) p. 153
- 4) p. 143
- 5) p. 233 & 234

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