

LENIN'S REVOLUTIONARY HERITAGE

(Palante, April 1975)

"We Communists are people of a special mold. We are made of special material. We are those who comprise the army of the great proletarian strategist, the army of Comrade Lenin. There is nothing higher than the honor to belong to this army. There is nothing higher than the title of member of the Party founded and led by Comrade Lenin. It is not given to all to be members of such a Party. It is not given to all to withstand the stress and storm that accompanies membership in such a Party. Sons of the working class, sons of poverty and struggle, sons of incredible deprivation and heroic effort - these are the ones who must first of all be members of such a Party. That is why the Leninist Party, the Communist Party, at the same time calls itself the Party of the working class."

"In departing from us, Comrade Lenin bequeathed to us the duty of holding aloft and guarding the purity of the title of member of the Party. We vow to you, Comrade Lenin, that we will fulfill your bequest with honor." (Speech delivered by Joseph Stalin following Lenin's death in 1924)

Vladimir Illyich Lenin, founder of Bolshevism, was born on April 22, 1870, in the city of Simbirsk, today known as Llianov. The international proletariat knows Lenin as the "Mountain Eagle," as Stalin called him, and the genius of proletarian revolution.

Throughout his life, Lenin fought hard for the ideology of the proletariat, clearing up confused ideas on Marxism, defending Marxism and struggling against all distortions of this revolutionary science. He led the Russian proletariat in carrying out its historic mission; and in doing so solved key problems, summed up important lessons and taught the international proletariat the universal laws governing the proletarian revolution and the construction of socialism.

By devoting his life to the education and organization of the proletariat, Lenin left us a treasure of works, such as: Who the Friends of the People Are and How They Fight Against the Social Democrats; The Tasks of Russian Social Democrats. On Marx and Marxism, his works include: The Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism; The Historical Destiny of the Doctrine of Karl Marx; and Marxism and Revisionism. In addition, he wrote: Left-Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder; War and Peace; The State and Revolution; On the National and Colonial Question, and one of his most brilliant contributions to Marxism - Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism - which, with the development of capitalism to its highest, decaying period, took us to a new era, to the eve of proletarian revolution, to the era of Marxism-Leninism.

"In one of the capitalist countries, the least developed, the victory of the working class is already achieved. In the others, with un-

paralleled pain and effort, the conditions are being established which will make this victory 'at any rate inevitable.'

"Let the 'Socialist' snivellers creak, let the bourgeoisie rage and fume; only people who shut their eyes so as not to see, and stuff their ears so as not to hear can fail to notice that all over the world the birth pangs of the old capitalist society, which is pregnant with Socialism, have begun.

"Our country, which has temporarily been advanced by the march of events to the van of the socialist revolution, is undergoing the very severe pains of the first period of travail, which has already begun. We have every reason to face the future with complete assurance and absolute confidence, for it is preparing for us new allies and new victories of the socialist revolution in a number of the more advanced countries.



Lenin addresses the Vsevoluch troops
on the Red Square, May 25, 1919

"We are entitled to be proud and to consider ourselves fortunate that it has been our lot to be the first, in one part of the globe, to fell that wild beast, capitalism, which has drenched the earth in blood and reduced humanity to starvation and demoralization and whose end is near and inevitable, no matter how monstrous and savage its frenzy in the face of death." (V.I. Lenin, from "Prophetic Words," June 29, 1918)

LENIN'S TEACHINGS ON PARTY BUILDING AND PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

In all his works and in his living example, Lenin also taught us that without a struggle against opportunism, we can not defeat imperialism, and the struggle will amount to a sham and a humbug.

"One of the essential conditions for preparing the proletariat for victory is a prolonged, persistent and ruthless struggle against opportunism, reformism, social-chauvinism, and similar bourgeois influences and tendencies, which are inevitable as long as the proletariat acts under capitalist conditions. Unless such a struggle is fought and unless a complete victory over opportunism within the working-class movement is preliminarily gained, there can be no hope for the dictatorship of the proletariat." (V.I. Lenin, from "The Constituent Assembly Elections and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat," December 16, 1919)

It was the genius of Lenin who taught us that the proletariat needs an "uninterrupted organization having continuity with the past and capable of leading the whole movement." He laid down the ideological foundation for such an organization, the proletarian party of a new type, in one of his most famous works, What Is To Be Done. In this piece, he summed up and explained for everyone to know that the ideological basis for all opportunism is the worshipping of spontaneity. (For further elaboration on the current line struggle in the U.S. Communist Movement on this question, see the Party Building section of our pamphlet, In the U.S. Pregnant with Revisionism! The Struggle for Proletarian Revolution Moves Ahead.)

Today, we must pay tribute to the great Lenin by continuing the struggle to build a genuine communist party of the U.S. proletariat. This party can only be built in an uncompromising fight against all shades of opportunism, in a fight for the clarity and application of Marxism-Leninism to our concrete situation in the U.S. - which will be clearly expressed in the political line of the new communist party of the U.S. multi-national proletariat.

The question of party building, the central task of communists and advanced workers in the U.S., has been the basic question for us since the revisionist "CP"USA betrayed the Leninist principles of proletarian revolution almost 20 years ago. One of the most treacherous things that the revisionists did in the "CP" when they took power was to liquidate the independent role of the party of the proletariat, leaving the class without its vanguard fighter to lead it in its showdown with the bourgeoisie - and instead they did everything possible to chain the proletariat to bourgeois parties, most especially to the Democratic Party in a total subjugation to Roosevelt during the Anti-Fascist United Front, and down the line to the present day in their support for McGovern and now for Ted Kennedy.

They did everything that Lenin taught us not to do.

IRON PARTY DISCIPLINE RESTS ON DEMOCRACY UNDER CENTRALIZED LEADERSHIP

Instead of an iron-disciplined organization of the most advanced working men and women, the "CP" was and is a loosely-knit organization based primarily, since its degeneration, on the small capitalists, petty bourgeoisie and labor aristocracy - the social props of opportunism in the working class movement.

Instead of combining legal and illegal methods of struggle, the revisionists believe only in legal parliamentarism. They believe in and promote the treacherous theory of a "peaceful transition to socialism."

We must apply the teachings of Lenin and deal with the question of party building on the ideological, political and organizational fronts. There are no ready-made formulas, no blueprints to speak of - just the nitty-gritty problem of application of the universal principles.

In the struggle against the revisionist "CP"USA, the anti-revisionist movement has been trying to apply the principles of party building. It has been on the question of line - over the various class questions that we have both reached unity as well as made clear the differences and opportunist lines that exist within the movement. One of the key struggles has been the question of democratic centralism, a Leninist principle for the party and communist organizations until the party is built.

"We have already more than once enunciated our theoretical views on the importance of discipline and how this concept is to be understood in the party of the working class. We defined it as unity of action, freedom of discussion and criticism. Only such discipline is worthy of the democratic party of the advanced class. The strength of the working class lies in organization. Unless the masses are organized, the proletariat is nothing. Organized - it is everything. Organization means unity of action, unity in practical operations...Therefore, the proletariat does not recognize unity of action without freedom to discuss and criticize." (Lenin's Collected Works, V.11, p.320, emphasis in original)

"Parties belonging to the Communist International must be organized on the principle of democratic centralism. In this period of acute civil war, the Communist Parties can perform their duty only if they are organized in a most centralized manner, are marked by an iron discipline bordering on military discipline, and have strong, authoritative party centres invested with wide powers and enjoying the unanimous confidence of the membership." (Lenin's Collected Works, Vol. 31, p.210, emphasis in the original)

Two main deviations from democratic centralism must be noted, must be summed up and corrected as we march forward to build the party. The main danger is bureaucratic centralism, which places the leadership above and in opposition to the organization and the class; where the leadership begins to function as a corporation, handing down mandates through the memo-method rather than establishing unity by arming the cadres with Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung Thought, and thereby establishing unity based on line through the method of unity-struggle-unity. This is the right opportunist deviation.

Then there is the danger of ultra-democracy. Manifestations of this deviation can be seen in a hatred for centralism. "Everything for the individual," "Down with the collective," is the method by which the anarchists (who fear and hate discipline) try to create a loose-knit organization, one which will be open to every striker, student and youth. This was the type of organization Martov wanted, which Lenin fought so hard, which Lenin said could only lead to One Step Forward, Two Steps Back. This is the left opportunist deviation.

Both these deviations are very current in the communist movement in the U.S. where bourgeois ideology is so prevalent, so corrupt, and very rooted in the communist movement. The fight for democratic centralism has been and continues to be a hard but very necessary fight against the bourgeois line.

Through this fight, we have deepened even further our understanding

and grasp of the undeniable truths of the Leninist principles of party building. The party must have iron discipline; this is done, says Lenin:

"Firstly by the class consciousness of the proletarian vanguard and by its devotion to the revolution, by its tenacity, self-sacrifice, and heroism. Secondly by its ability to link itself with, to keep in close touch with, and to a certain extent, if you like to merge with the broadest masses of toilers - primarily with the proletariat, but also with the non-proletarian toiling masses. Thirdly, by the correctness of the political leadership exercised by the vanguard, by the correctness of its political strategy and tactics, proved that the broad masses have been convinced by their own experience that they are correct." (V.I. Lenin, Left-Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder)

We know that this struggle will be continued when the party is built, as the proletariat seizes state power and throughout the struggle for socialism and communism. However, we must also take note of some particularities of party building in the U.S. In this country today, there exist several democratic centralist organizations. All these organizations must examine how in fact we have been implementing democratic centralism, so that errors can be uncovered, criticized, so we can learn from them and thereby build on one of the positive aspects of our movement, struggling against the rotten opportunist lines that want to sneak into the party.

LEARN FROM PAST ERRORS TO AVOID FUTURE ERRORS

Lenin said that the seriousness of a party is shown through its stance on criticism and self-criticism.

"A political party's attitude to its own mistakes is one of the most important and surest ways of judging how earnest the party is and how it fulfills in practice its obligations to its class and the working people. Frankly acknowledging a mistake, analysing the conditions that have led up to it, and thrashing out the means of rectifying it - that is the hallmark of a serious party; that is how it should perform its duties; and that is how it should educate and train its class and the masses." (Lenin's Collected Works, Vol. 31, p. 57, emphasis in original)

On this question, too, we must summarize the deviations and opportunist lines - either all unity, no struggle or the sectarian tendency of all struggle, no unity. The opportunists, fearing exposure, either resort to keeping everything under the rug and you can bet are rotten liberals, covering each other's backs, stabbing each other in the back at the same time, building up "thrones of power," jockeying for positions, "you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours" sort of deal. Or on the other hand, struggling against everybody and at every point to cover up their own ideological, political and organizational distortions of Marxism-Leninism.

In contrast to these opportunist deviations, inner-organizational criticism and self-criticism is the weapon to resolve contradictions, to rectify the party's style of work, to steel the party in the heat of class struggle against its internal as well as external enemies.

We, in the PRRWO, have been guilty of sectarianism towards the communist movement in this last period, and we will continue to struggle against this deviation, uniting on the basis of line and struggling against all deviations from Marxism-Leninism, against opportunism internally and with other organizations - to reach the level of unity necessary to build the party.

CONCLUSION

We must commemorate the 105th anniversary of Lenin's birthday by breaking with social democratic styles of work and applying the Bolshevik principles in a living way. We take much inspiration from and recognize and accept the seriousness of this responsibility when we read the words of a weaver who read Lenin's Where To Begin and wrote:

"...I showed the Iskra to many fellow workers and the copy has been read to tatters; but we treasure it greatly...The Iskra writes about our own cause, about the cause of all Russia which cannot be evaluated in kopeks or measured in hours of work; when you read the paper you understand why the gendarms and police are afraid of us workers and of those intellectuals whom we follow. There is no denying that they do not simply make the bosses tremble for their pocketbooks, but inspire fear in the tsar, the employers and the rest...It will not take much now to set the working folk aflame. All that is wanted is a spark to kindle the fire that is already smoldering among the people. How true are the words 'the spark will kindle a flame!'"

"...In the past every strike was an event, but today everyone sees that strikes alone are not enough, that we must now strive for liberty, win it by might and main. Today everyone, old and young, is eager to read, but the sad thing is that there are not books. Last Sunday I gathered eleven people and read them 'Where to Begin,' and we discussed it till late in the evening. How true it expresses everything, how it gets to the very heart of things...And we would like to write a letter to your Iskra, to ask you to teach us not only how to begin, but how to live and how to die."

MARXIST-LENINISTS UNITE!

BUILD THE LENINIST PARTY!



"Dictatorship is rule based directly upon force and unrestricted by any laws. The revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat is rule won and maintained by the use of violence by the proletariat against the bourgeoisie, rule that is unrestricted by any laws." --Lenin, from Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky (The photo above is from the People's Republic of Albania)