

WVO - PRRWO HOLD JOINT FORUM ON PARTY BUILDING

On November 7, 1975, 400 people attended a forum in NYC sponsored jointly by the Workers Viewpoint Organization and the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization. The forum was called in order to wage comradely polemics on burning questions facing the communist movement in the U.S. today. These questions included: revisionism in the U.S.; party building-- the key link to party building, analysis of the communist movement, concrete tasks facing us in order to build our party; and certain trade union questions-- including, under what conditions is the united front from above used and who is the advanced worker?

The ideological struggle at the forum was sharp and in the spirit of unity-struggle-unity. Both organizations agree that the forum was indeed one successful step in achieving our goal of developing higher levels of unity and implementing the tasks of Marxist-Leninists Unite! and Win the Advanced to Communism! We also saw that the principled polemics at the forum, struggling questions through, deepening our grasp and understanding of our unities and differences, differentiated this forum from those held by the opportunists such as the Guardian-- forums in which a hundred questions are raised and each is treated superficially, with people leaving with no more clarity than that which they had when they walked in the door.

The main struggle in this joint forum focused on the key link to party building. Secondary emphasis was given to the question of trade union work, the united front from above, and the role of the advanced.

In the near future, we will be reprinting the presentations of both WVO and the PRRWO. In this article, we will briefly outline some of the unities and differences raised at the forum.

INTERNATIONAL SITUATION

Both organizations agreed that the danger of world war is increasing. However, the WVO holds that the principal contradiction in the world is shifting, and it is an error to only say "revolution is the main trend in the world"; there are now two contending trends. The PRRWO holds that revolution is still the main trend in the world today and that it is the national liberation struggles against imperialism and social-imperialism that are sharpening all the other basic contradictions. The

PRRWO also pointed out that we have never raised the revolutionary trend alone; we have also recognized the growing danger of war abroad and fascism at home and have been raising these consistently in our publications and speeches. We ask comrades to study the last 8 issues of Palante.

ADVANCED WORKER

Both organizations agreed that the communist movement must take a qualitative leap in order to meet the tasks confronting us. What is hurting us most is the lack of a genuine Bolshevik Party; that is why we hold that the central task of all Marxist-Leninists is party building. We agreed that the party must represent the most advanced detachment of the working class-- it cannot be a mass party, open to every striker and every student protestor. We disagreed, however, in how we saw the advanced elements.

The WVO holds that the advanced workers "have to be open to socialism" and must have the confidence of other workers. The PRRWO stands with the essence of Lenin's definition in a "Retrograde Trend in Social Democracy":

"From among these come, in the main, the advanced workers that every working class movement brings to the fore, those who can win the confidence of the laboring masses, who devote themselves entirely to the education and organization of the proletariat, who accept socialism consciously, and who even elaborate independent socialist theories...they will study, study, study and turn themselves into conscious Social Democrats..."

The WVO holds that to apply the Leninist definition of an advanced worker to the conditions today, in 1975, is a left, dogmatic error, because the fusion of the communist and workers' movements has just begun and except for a relatively tiny number, the workers have not yet been "historically preconditioned" to become communists.

The PRRWO disagrees. We hold that while it has not yet been completed, the fusion of the communist and workers' movements did not just begin when our organizations were formed; it has a history. This fusion must not be reduced simply to an organizational question-- we are talking about fusing ideologically, politically, and organizationally.

The formation of the CPUSA and some of its work during the depression, for instance, was a big step in this fusion-- as has been the struggle against reformism, anarchism, dual unionism, and terrorism. The working class has gone through a struggle against these erroneous trends, and the advanced have rejected them in practice and led the struggle against them (i.e., the working class did not come out in support of the terrorism of the 1960's or '70's).

Go to a union meeting and you will see countless workers who reject the reformist, bourgeois line of the labor hacks. They do not have a scientific understanding of the problem and lack organization; yet from among these workers, there are some who believe in socialism (not yet understanding it scientifically), striving to deepen their understanding, and are willing to study, study, study in order to transform themselves into conscious Marxist-Leninists, and devote their lives to the education and organization of their class-- it is in this way that they will win the confidence and leadership of the masses of workers.

We agree that the advanced workers are a numerically small stratum in relationship to the whole class. It is only this small stratum of workers that will be able to grasp the Marxist-Leninist line put forward by the communists, will come forward, and will rise above the constant barrage of propaganda put out through the bourgeois superstructure (mass media, educational apparatus, religion, etc.) Communists must emphasize the winning over and training of the advanced, who then must aid in the process of raising the broader stratum of intermediate workers to the level of the advanced.

KEY LINK TO PARTY BUILDING

The PRRWO holds that the process of party building has gone through distinct periods. From 1956 to 1972, following the revisionist betrayal of the "CP", the key link was the ideological reaffirmation of the principles of Marxism-Leninism (ie, the state according to Lenin vs. the state according to the revisionists-- the state of the whole people).

During this time we had to defeat the eclectic trend that borrowed a little from everywhere-- Che, Fanon, Regis Debray, Mao Tse-Tung, Bakunin, etc. Out of this eclectic trend came such erroneous lines

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as the lumpen are the vanguard (from Bakunin) and the guerrilla "foco" theory for the U.S. (from Debray). In struggle against these and other incorrect lines, advanced elements did come forward and struggle to grasp Marxism-Leninism more firmly. Some organizations did put forward independent socialist theories-- i.e., the BPP 10-Point Program, the YLP 13-Point Program, the programs of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers and the Black Workers Congress. These could not yet be scientific socialist theories, because this understanding only comes through the study of socialism as a science.

The WVO criticizes us for being empiricist when we say that the movement went through a period of eclecticism. They say it was only the national movements (from which we came) and that only oppressed nationality workers came forward. First, we say this is incorrect-- study SDS's history, for instance, and you will see they were plagued with the same eclecticism. Second, the workers who came forward spoke in the interests of all workers. One example is how the League of Revolutionary Black Workers united with white workers around their common class interests, but not with the BPP who was pushing the lumpen as the vanguard.

Out of the struggle to reaffirm and defend the universal principles of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-Tung Thought; a new anti-revisionist communist movement developed (see Palante, Vol.1 #5, MayDay Supplement). The struggle for application then became the testing ground for the ideological unity of the anti-revisionist communist movement. When we began to apply Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-Tung Thought the genuine began to be separated from the sham. The RU, for instance, temporarily took hegemony over the movement with their economist line and central task of "build the revolutionary unity, consciousness, and organization of the working class". It was through an intense struggle over the application of Marxism-Leninism in practice, over political line that the RU was exposed-- their line on key class questions such as party building (they wanted a Menshevik Party) and the national question ("the nation of a new type") proved in practice their opportunism.

When we say political line, we mean the application of Marxism-Leninism to the concrete conditions. We believe at this time, political line will crystallize our other tasks (ideological and organizational), and will aid them-- just as the struggle for ideological reaffirmation aided the political and organizational tasks of that period and moved us forward. We disagree when Workers Viewpoint reduces political line to a question of formulation, to

words on paper.

We hold that the WVO position that the key link is ideological and political line and that we are just beginning to lay down the ideological foundation of the party views the movement as static, with no motion from a lower to a higher level and negates the genuine historical progress and advances of our movement.

We agree that the ideological tasks are far from over-- in fact they will go on even under socialism. We agree that the party must be put on its ideological plane. We believe that this was the key task in the first period, but that this continues to be an on-going task because deviations will develop. However, while the battle for ideological clarity and reaffirmation is an on-going one, in this period, the key link to be grasped in order to build the party is the fight for the political line of the party. In the battle for political line we will inevitably and constantly be taken back to the ideological sphere. There is an inter-relationship between ideological, political and organizational; but one must be key in a given period.

ANALYSIS OF THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT

Both organizations hold that the communist movement is made up of a revolutionary wing and an opportunist wing. Regarding the revolutionary wing-- we agree that it includes ATM, WVO, and PRRWO. WVO includes the Revolutionary Workers League; PRRWO is still studying the line of these comrades, but considers them honest and in motion. PRRWO also includes the Revolutionary Bloc in the revolutionary wing.

Regarding the opportunist wing-- the two organizations agree that it includes the "RCP", OL, Guardian and IWK. The PRRWO also holds that the Revolutionary Workers Congress and Workers Congress are in this wing.

The PRRWO also sees Resistencia Puertorriqueña and El Comité as honest and in motion.

Both organizations agree that PSP is a revisionist organization. The WVO pointed out that because of PSP's influence in the Puerto Rican liberation movement, some communists have failed to criticize and expose their revisionism, thus falling into liberalism and centrism.

UNITED FRONT FROM ABOVE AND BELOW

The WVO holds that the united front from below is fundamental but does not exclude the united front from above.

They also say that communists must not follow the line of "stages"-- first, from below; then, from above.

They quoted Dimitrioff and then they said that although the "conditions may be different, the principle still applies."

The PRRWO disagrees. The Comintern clearly stated that you must build the united front from below first and that the masses must be clear of the possible dangers of the united front from above. To do otherwise is to give over the leadership of an unorganized rank and file to the union hacks. The united front from above must come from a position of strength. It is when the rank and file have been won over and organized that we can force the union bureaucrats to negotiate. (We would also like to point out that you cannot unite the workers from below if

you have an incorrect line on the advanced worker).

One final point, the PRRWO holds that to call the union bureaucrats "misleaders" and to push for the united front from above at this time is to mask the true reactionary nature of these bourgeois agents, how they pave the way for fascism, and their counter-revolutionary role internationally (i.e., AFL-CIO role in aiding the counter-revolutionaries in Chile).

The WVO holds that we must expose the union bureaucrats, but must unite with them when they fight for economic demands.

SUMMARY

The ability to hold this forum and conduct these polemics is a reflection of the fraternal relations of the WVO and the PRRWO and a concrete indication of our commitment to fulfill our responsibilities to build our Party by uniting Marxist-Leninists and winning the advanced to communism. We think the forum was a contribution to both these tasks.

We want to criticize ourselves, for our weakness in not asking other organizations present to put forward their positions on the questions under discussion. Failing to do this, too many organizations sat back and became "observers", and did not participate actively in the ideological struggle. This is a weakness that will be corrected at future forums.

Finally we would like to point out that the struggle at the forum itself was not primarily on the universal principles of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-Tung Thought. It was on political line--on the application of Marxism-Leninism to solve some of the key questions facing us, questions that must be resolved in order to build the genuine Bolshevik Party that will lead the working class and oppressed masses in the life and death struggle against the bourgeoisie.

MARXIST-LENINISTS UNITE AND WIN THE ADVANCED TO COMMUNISM!