

# Marxist-Leninist Party holds 4th Congress

This fall the members of the Marxist-Leninist Party attended their 4th Congress. This national assembly, the highest authority in the party, addressed a series of problems confronting the party.

The collapse of Soviet revisionism in Russia and Eastern Europe and the end of the cold war has brought a series of changes in the world. As well, changes in Western capitalism have been accumulating in recent decades. At the same time, the study being conducted by the party on the theory of socialist revolution and the experience of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia has posed a number of

new theoretical problems or raised old problems in new ways. (See the Aug. 20, 1991 issue of *Workers' Advocate Supplement* for an enumeration of some of these problems.)

These changes in the world and in the party's thinking have given rise to a myriad of opinions within the party. Since the 4th National Conference held in 1990, a number of controversies have broken out within the Party and a party-wide debate was begun last year. These discussions did not resolve existing disagreements but provided an exchange of opinions which may help to orient fur-

ther study of these matters.

Despite the potentially divisive controversies, the congress united. It passed a resolution on the role and tasks of the MLP in the present difficult situation (reprinted below). It agreed to resolve disagreements by deepening the party's study of the current situation, the Bolshevik revolution, and communist theory. It also authorized a cutback in the frequency of the publishing of *Workers' Advocate* and the *Supplement* in order to help alleviate the overwork in the central apparatus and open some room for theoretical work and providing deeper

analysis in the papers. As well, it elected a Central Committee, decided to hold another congress within two years, and took other practical decisions.

The difficulties facing the MLP have not magically disappeared with the holding of the 4th Congress. But the measures it decided on create the basis for preserving revolutionary Marxism-Leninism so that a mass communist party of the working class can be built up once the revolutionary movement revives. ■

## On the role and tasks of the Marxist-Leninist Party in the present difficult situation

The 4th Congress confronts the crisis that has engulfed our party. In analyzing that crisis, and discussing the different possibilities for the future, it sets out the tasks needed to strive to preserve this revolutionary Marxist-Leninist trend in the present difficult situation.

### Conditions for the party crisis

The crisis facing our party is based on a number of conditions, including:

■The protracted ebb of the revolutionary movement in this country.

■The reactionary offensive of U.S. imperialism on the working class in this country and abroad in the face of its own economic crises and decline.

■The storm of liquidationism towards party-building and renegacy towards the revolutionary movement by the revisionist, trotskyst, and other opportunist trends.

■The crisis of revolutionary theory itself arising from the changes in the domestic and world situation and our deeper study of the experience of the revolutionary socialist movement of the working class.

### Manifestations of crisis in the MLP

The most important manifestations of the crisis in the party include:

■The reduction in the size of the party. This is due to small recruiting of new members combined with a steady loss of forces from demoralization, personal crises, and passivity. This situation has required the party's work to be gradually scaled back, carried on at a slower pace, and done in a more concentrated way.

■The loss of a series of bases of concentration in workplaces and communities. And increased difficulties in creating and maintaining a pro-party trend among workers at places where we have been able to maintain concentrated work.

■A weakening of the ideological cohesion of the party which has broken out in a wide-ranging internal debate over various questions of the party's theory and tactics.

### The conception of our party

We have always held that for the working class movement to succeed in revolution it must not only be organized in a series of diverse organizational forms. It must, also, build up its own independent party — a party of revolutionary action, bound to the masses, and guided by the scientific socialism of Marxism-Leninism.

In 1980, although we had by no means yet established a mass party of the workers, we declared the founding of the MLP. This step was taken because, above all, the trends among the wave of activists that had emerged in the revolutionary movement and the fight against revisionism in the 1960's had been sorted

out, the trend of neo-revisionism had become exposed, and revolutionary Marxism-Leninism had become a consolidated and objective trend with supporters among the workers and among sections of activists. The aim of the MLP was to build up this trend so that, eventually, a truly mass communist party could come into being to lead the working class in revolution.

Although originally we had thought the MLP was being founded in favorable conditions in which a new revolutionary wave was imminent, it was soon discovered that we faced a particularly difficult situation. What ensued has been over a decade of arduous revolutionary work in the face of the onslaught of the bourgeoisie, rampant liquidationism, and a continuing ebb in the revolutionary movement. Instead of growth, we have had to pay constant attention to combating over-extension and over-elaboration of our work, and we have faced a sharp battle to preserve the very idea of building a vanguard party of the working class.

Today, although the size of the MLP has been reduced and its base among the masses somewhat weakened, it remains an objective revolutionary trend. It continues to carry out revolutionary agitation in the working class. It still organizes in particular workplaces, is part of the motion among definite sections of the workers, and is connected with various militant workers who assist the party's work in various ways, although not necessarily in every individual local area. It also remains a significant anti-reformist pole in the mass movements in several cities and, in certain places and at certain times, it is able to provide guidance for certain movements. It continues to slowly deepen its theoretical work and summation of experience to provide a theoretical basis for the socialist revolution of the workers. And it does what it can to encourage the emergence of a new international of workers' communism.

Whether it has been in the protests that broke out against the imperialist war in the Mid-East, or on the front lines of the resistance to the reactionary anti-abortion bigots, or in the outpouring of anger at the racist verdict in the Rodney King affair, or in other struggles, there has been no other trend bringing to the fore the class issues involved, organizing among the workers themselves to bring them into action, and encouraging steps towards an independent class movement and the forging of the workers own revolutionary vanguard party.

### Prospects for the future

The MLP is the product of the revolutionary movement of the 1960's and its fate has always been linked to the revival of a mass revolutionary movement.

Conditions have been ripening for another mass upsurge throughout the

1980's. The recent riots against racist police brutality, the confrontations at clinics in defense of women's rights, the street battles against the war on Iraq, and such things as the mass disgruntlement over the presidential elections are all indications of the sharpening class contradictions.

At the same time there are a number of countervailing factors holding back a new wave of struggle. These include, among others, that the unity of the bourgeoisie for the time being leaves little opening for the emergence of stable mass movements; that the working class is being destabilized by a restructuring in the economy — including workplace shutdowns and mass layoffs — in which the new lines of development are just emerging; that the workers' movement is also being disorganized by the reformist union bureaucracy and other "respectable" leaders; that the revolutionary alternative remains extremely weak and unable to offer an independent pole in most instances.

In this situation, we can no more predict now than we could in 1980 when and how a new revolutionary movement will break out.

If a new mass revolutionary movement is forestalled for another period of time, it is possible that the MLP will not be able to survive as the trend it presently represents. Should that occur in the future, comrades then will have to decide what to do. But today all efforts must be put into the work to preserve this trend.

Even with a revival of the revolutionary movement, the fate of the MLP is not automatically secure. The immediate effect of a new upsurge of the masses will be to intensify the pressures on the MLP, a severe test of whether it can play its role in bringing into being a truly mass revolutionary vanguard party of the working class.

Nobody owns such a class party. Nor can it be defined in advance exactly how such a party will come into being. We can only prepare for such an eventuality by steadfast revolutionary work to combat revisionism and opportunism, to develop our communist theory, to link it to the workers' movement and other mass struggles, and to infuse the class conscious workers and revolutionary activists with party concept.

### Tasks of the MLP

Today we face an arduous struggle simply to preserve the MLP. That is not an end in itself but is, rather, a struggle to sustain the vital features of our trend so that it can play its proper role in an eventual revival of the revolutionary movement.

Above all, the preservation of our trend requires work:


■to maintain our national press, without which we cannot have a national, party-type of organization;

■to continue to build local ties with definite sections of the masses of workers and oppressed, without which we will lose our roots and face the danger of turning into just another sect;

■to find the way to restore internal cohesion, without which it will eventually become impossible to maintain the national press or build up local ties among the masses.

These tasks, in turn, require that we gradually carry out certain essential theoretical work to help settle controversial issues among us, deepen the fight against revisionism and opportunism, and orient the party in the new conditions that we face.

Today the revolutionary movement from the 1960's has passed away. And a new revolutionary movement is yet to come into being. The 4th Congress dedicates itself to the struggle to preserve revolutionary Marxism-Leninism in this difficult situation so that in an eventual new wave of mass upheaval a mass communist vanguard party can be built up to lead the working class, and around it all the oppressed masses, to the victory of workers' socialism. ■



STRUGGLE  
A Magazine of Revolutionary Literature

Struggle is a literary journal of the Detroit Branch of the Marxist-Leninist Party, USA.  
\$1.50 by mail

Order from:  
Struggle  
Hesper Station  
P.O. Box 13261  
Detroit, MI 48213 0261