

## DEVELOPING A CORRECT ATTITUDE TOWARDS ONESELF

### 1. WHY IS HAVING A CORRECT ATTITUDE TOWARDS ONESELF IMPORTANT?

It is important because we cannot become genuine proletarian revolutionaries without it. The ruling class controls us not just with police but also because it controls the way we think. So developing a correct attitude towards ourselves is one thing we must do if we are to master Marxism and lead the people to freedom. The more we learn Marxism and study the great masters we see them saying over and over such things as "know thy enemy and know thyself, and you can fight a thousand battles without failure" (Mao), "We don't fear the enemy; we only fear the errors of our comrades!" (Ho) and "all revolutionary parties, which have hitherto perished, did so because they grew conceited, failed to see where their strength lay, and failed to speak of their weaknesses." (Lenin). This is a universal law of Marxism. It has been scientifically verified by the experience of millions of workers and peasants in the world. We know from our study that to become genuine revolutionaries we must go through changes in order to acquire dialectical materialist tools. These tools cannot be bought at Woolworth's or learned in the bourgeois schools and churches. Our emancipation is our own work. As we saw in our study of dialectical materialism the bourgeoisie and the proletariat are opposites: "but at the same time they comprise a definite unity: they are the classes of a single social and economic formation - capitalism - in a state of irreconcilable contradiction. This contradiction will be logically solved dialectically by the internal struggle, the proletarian revolution. The bourgeois, the capitalist, is our enemy. In order to defeat our enemy we must overcome the enemy ideas we have inside us. "To transform one's world outlook is a fundamental matter...In revolutionizing his ideology and in transforming his world outlook, every cadre must see himself in a correct light and take a correct attitude towards himself....Whether one is able to take a correct attitude towards oneself is the key question determining whether one can learn the 'three constantly read articles' well and revolutionize one's thinking." (Maxims for Revolutionaries). This correct attitude towards ourselves which is one of study and analysis, of being materialist about ourselves, and this Marxist outlook is something the whole working class needs. (Go back and re-read your article by Adoratsky in dialectical and historical materialism where he quotes Marx in 1846, 1850 and 1871 saying the working class has to "clense itself of the mire of the old society and become fit" and "to change yourselves and to render yourselves fit" "transforming circumstances and men." )"This is one of the fundamental ideas of Marxism." In the Los Angeles Work Group we call this process "proletarianization" and in Developing a Correct Attitude Towards Oneself we are sharing with you part of our approach to becoming true proletarian revolutionaries.

### 2. WHAT ARE THE COMPONENT PARTS OF A CORRECT ATTITUDE TOWARDS ONESELF?

We are not sure of this yet. It is something that we are developing a better understanding of as we develop and change more into true Marxists. What we have here is a further development of many concepts we have used in the LAWG. Here is how we see it:

- 1) Human Nature - Realize that There is only "class nature."
- 2) Realize that you are both a motive force in the revolution, and a target of the revolution, that each of us faces the problem of eradicating the bourgeois world outlook and establishing a proletarian one in his mind" and "therefore must consciously wage revolution against himself." (Maxims for Revolutionaries).
- 3) In conjunction with realizing the two-line struggle inside yourself apply the principle of "one divides into two:" realize that "he may have his strong points, but he is sure to have shortcomings....Anyone who thinks he has no contradictions in his mind and needs no remoulding is harbouring a metaphysical viewpoint that is extremely harmful." (Maxims) Don't be Liberal with Yourself.
- 4) Apply the Principles of Criticism/Self-Criticism/Support to your relations with people and in intra-party struggle (struggle inside a communist organization). "Make a clear distinction between the attitudes and means to be adopted toward the enemy and those to be adopted toward their own comrades." (Liu..Some Characteristics of the Proletariat).

- 5) Elevate Revolutionary Morality and Make a Clean Sweep of Individualism .  
"In its social origin individualism is a reflection within the Party of petty-bourgeois and bourgeois ideas." (Mao, On Individualism in Correcting Mistaken Ideas in the Party). Realize that individualism (The Making-Good Bug we read in our first session on How to Learn Marxism-Leninism) is the essence of the bourgeois world outlook. "At the core of the struggle between the proletarian and bourgeois world outlooks is the struggle between the concept of working for the public interests and of working for one's own interests." (Maxims) Understand the difference between individualism under capitalism and individualism under socialism.
- 6) Increase Our Understanding of Petty-Bourgeois Ideas and Characteristics and Bourgeois Ideas and Characteristics. If we re-read the Marxist Guide for Summarizing Experience point number 9 is that these attitudes are "a formidable enemy in the way of a correct summing up of experience. How we define petty-bourgeois Determines How we wage struggle inside ourselves and with others. It determines how to tell a true and false Marxist.
- 7) Increase Our Understanding of Proletarian Ideas and Characteristics .  
Promote Our Class Consciousness According to Lenin's Definition and our Practice According to Dimitrov's Criteria for Selecting Cadres. Remember we "receive (our) best training in the process of struggle, in surmounting difficulties and withstanding tests, and also from favourable and unfavourable examples of conduct." (Dimitrov)

3. WHAT MATERIALS ARE TO BE STUDIED AND IN WHAT ORDER

- 1) The Bourgeois Theory of Human Nature by Mao from Yanan Forum on Art and Literature (one page). ("The human nature boosted by certain petty-bourgeois intellectuals...is in essence nothing but bourgeois individualism, and so, in their eyes, proletarian human nature is contrary to human nature."
- 2) Maxims for Revolutionaries - The 'Three Constantly Read Articles, Peking Review, Jan. 6, 1967. Discusses what is a correct attitude towards oneself, using the idea of contradiction and "one divides into two" viewpoint. (2 p.)
- 3) Go back and re-read Criticism-Self-Criticism-Support Summary by WSG (3 p.) members and if you have time also look at Stalin's Training Cadres on the Basis of Their Own Mistakes (one page). (in Criticism-Self Criticism materials).
- 4) On Individualism by Mao from Correcting Mistaken Ideas in the Party. When there is too much individualism in the Red Army in China Mao says that "the method of correction is primarily to strengthen education so as to rectify individualism ideologically."
- 5) On Revolutionary Morality by Ho Chi Minh from Selected Writings.  
"To study Marxism-Leninism is to learn the spirit in which one should deal with things, with other people and with oneself. It means to study the universal Marxist-Leninist Truths in order to apply them creatively to the practical conditions of our country. We must study with a view to action. Theory must go hand in hand with practice. But some comrades only learn by heart a few books on Marxism-Leninism...They only want to show off their knowledge, not to apply it to revolutionary action. This is also individualism." (3 pages)
- 6) Bourgeois Individualism vs. The Individual Under socialism by M.D. Kammari, Socialism and the Individual, Moscow, 1951 (excerpts) (4 pages).  
"Without the emancipation of the masses there can be no emancipation of the individual. The emancipation of the masses is the main condition for the emancipation of the individual..." This article describes what the individual's position will be determined by under socialism. Under socialism "It is not property status, not national origin, not sex, nor office, but personal ability and personal labour, that determines the position of every citizen in society." As for the great individuality of the Morgans, Rockefellers, Fords etc. it points out that "capitalists dominate in economic life, set policy, govern the state, not because they possess

special ability, but because they own the means of production"...to what else do the 'creative power' and 'ability' of the capitalists amount to if not to the art of squeezing surplus value from the labour of the wageworkers they exploit? As for their dominant position in society, that is determined not by their personal labour and their personal ability but by the amount of capital they own."

- 7) "Petty-Bourgeois" These are definitions put together by the LAWG. The heart of this is from Resolutions on Some Questions in the History of Our Party by Mao where he describes the three aspects of petty-bourgeois ideology: "Subjectivism in ideology, Left and Right deviations in political orientation and factionalism in organisation." Lenin also helps us understand why the petty-bourgeoisie thinks as he does: "The petty-bourgeois is in such an economic position, the conditions of his life are such that he cannot help deceiving himself, he involuntarily and inevitably gravitates one minute towards the bourgeoisie, the next towards the proletariat. It is economically impossible for him to pursue an independent 'line.' His past draws him towards the bourgeoisie, his future towards the proletariat. His better judgment gravitates towards the latter, his prejudice (to use a familiar expression of Marx's) towards the former." (Lenin, CW, vol. 25, 200) (3 pages)
- 8) transforming your world outlook from Making of New Man (in our Criticism Self-Criticism study also). His struggle against his petty-bourgeois characteristics are described and he sums up by drawing "four points for overcoming subjectivity and one-sidedness." (2 pages)
- 9) "Factors Retarding the Ideological Development of the Workers" by William Z. Foster from History of the Communist Party of the United States, 542-43. A former leader of this "Communist" party describes 6 factors which "have tended to cultivate petty-bourgeois illusions among the workers and to lead them to believe that they can solve their economic and political problems within the framework of the capitalist system." (one page)
- 10) Some Characteristics of the Proletariat from Liu Shao-Chih, Training of the Communist Party Member in Compton, Mao's China, 127-129) (2 pages). This is a summation of the advanced characteristics to be found within the proletariat. This does not mean that every proletarian thinks this way but that as a class of people this is the way our most advanced members have tended to think and act. As he says: "Because all exploiters want to improve their own position, they must injure others...For exploiters, the injury and bankruptcy of others is a necessary condition for their own development, and their own good fortune is founded on the misfortunes of others. Therefore, exploiters do not know really firm solidarity or mutual assistance and have no true human sympathy...The proletariat typifies the exact opposite of the characteristics mentioned above. It does not exploit others but is itself exploited. There is no basic conflict of interests among workers nor are there any among the oppressed and exploited masses. If workers want to develop and seek their own liberation, not only must they not harm the interests or obstruct the development of other workers and laborers, but they must be in complete solidarity with them. Only then can they develop, elevate, and liberate themselves."
- 11) Lenin's Definition of Class Consciousness (from Draft and Explanation of a Programme for the Social Democratic Party which we studied under Classes and the Class Struggle). This is self-explanatory and describes the 3 traits which determine how high our class consciousness is: 1) "understanding that the only way to improve the conditions and to achieve their emancipation is to conduct a struggle against the capitalist...class" 2) "understanding that the interests of all the workers...are identical, that they all constitute one class" 3) "understanding that to achieve their aims they have to work to influence the affairs of state, just as the landlords and capitalists did, and are continuing to do." (one page)
- 12) Dimitrov's Criteria for Selecting Cadres (from Stalin, On Organization, 48-50). Here are some well established criteria that communists use to judge each other. They are 1) absolute devotion to the cause of the working

class 2)closest possible contact with the masses 3)ability independently to find one's bearings 4)discipline and Bolshevik hardening in the struggle against the class enemy. Notice that he says "cadres receive their best training in the process of struggle, in surmounting difficulties and withstanding tests, and also from favourable and unfavourable examples of conduct."

4. HOW TO APPLY THE STUDY TO THE SUM-UP

In the Marxist Guide to Summarizing Experience we said that when we finish the sum-up "we will know 'what was right and wrong about each of us and our achievements and shortcomings in the work we have done.' In order to do this we will each have to have a correct attitude towards ourselves."... "We must use Marxism to 'examine the work we have done, make an all-round analysis of the contradictions arising in the course of development, distinguish between right and wrong, conscientiously carry out criticism and self-criticism, especially self-criticism, and really uphold 'whatever conforms to Marxism and class struggle and repudiate what goes against it.'" In the next month we are going to increase our understanding of what contradictions have existed, what we have been trying to accomplish, and if we have been successful or not. We cannot do this well if each of us fails to develop a correct attitude towards themself. Study the materials with an eye to applying them to yourself and also to others. Concentrate primarily on yourself and try to analyze yourself according to the readings. Do some writing if you can. Focus on your strong points (proletarian characteristics) and weak points (petty-bourgeois and bourgeois characteristics). Besides doing some writing if possible (both about yourself and others) be prepared to talk about your attitude toward yourself at the next meeting. As an example of looking at others see the writing by R.B. which has been passed out where he talks about members of the WSG. Follow Mao's advice that "our attitude towards every person and every matter should be one of analysis and study." (Mao, Methods of Work of Party Committees). Each individual should be prepared to talk about themselves for 10-15 minutes including questions from others. We will use this information in order to deepen our understanding of contradictions we are all facing now.

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