

THE COMMUNIST

WORKERS AND OPPRESSED PEOPLE OF THE WORLD, UNITE!

"A communist should have largeness of mind and he should be staunch and active, looking upon the interests of the revolution as his very life and subordinating his personal interests to those of the revolution; always and everywhere he should adhere to principle and wage a tireless struggle against



all incorrect ideas and actions so as to consolidate the collective life of the Party and strengthen the ties between the Party and the masses; he should be more concerned about the Party and the masses than about any individual and more concerned about others than about himself. Only thus can he be considered a Communist." Mao Tsetung

VOL. III no. 4

WORKERS CONGRESS (M-L)

POB 1297 CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60690

MARCH 1, 1977 15¢

CONDITIONS FOR THE PARTY

Because the bourgeoisie's class interests are split among competing capitalist groups, bourgeois political life always reflects the tendency to develop several competing political parties. But the proletariat acts with a unity of will and a unity of action. There will be only one party capable of leading the U.S. proletarian revolution and it is the duty of every revolutionary to support and strengthen that vanguard.

Therefore when four Marxist-Leninist organizations consider themselves the sole vanguard of the revolution in the U.S. and alone capable of immediately forming a new communist party according to the revolutionary style of Marxism-Leninism, at least three are wrong. In fact in our movement all four are wrong because none has taken on the task of preparing the conditions for the formation of a new revolutionary party out of the scattered forces and circles that make up that movement.

PARTY BUILDING OR PARTY DECLARING

A decisive victory has been won for the line that party building is our central task. But in taking up that line, comrades have been slow to pose the far-reaching national tasks required to establish a vanguard party. Lacking a disciplined Marxist-Leninist method, party building has given way to party declaring.

This also is a question of bowing to spontaneity. We treat party building as if it were a question of organizing a demonstration in front of City Hall and follow the line of least resistance. The movement is supposed to determine where the action is and link up quickly before it is too late. In THE COMMUNIST, v. III, no. 2 (Dec. 23, 1976), we summed up this situation as follows:

"The struggle begun in 1974 when communists took up party building as the central task has never been fully or adequately unfolded. There has been no consolidation on the need to prepare the conditions for a party. Instead there has been a hasty search in one direction after another for a party congress or organizing committee."

It is the failure to pose correctly the task of preparing the conditions for the formation of a party--which is the essence of party building--that accounts for the pompous self-righteousness associated with the circle sectarianism that has accompanied each party forming enterprise. The same failure lays the basis for confusion and demoralization with the collapse of another party bubble.

MEASURE THE CLOTH

Summing up the preparations undertaken to prepare the congress where the actual formation of the Russian revolutionary Marxist party took place, Lenin wrote:

"We were, in fact, guided by the maxim: measure your cloth seven times before you cut it; and we had every moral right to expect that after the cloth had been cut our comrades would not start complaining and measuring all over again."

Among those in our movement that have taken to cutting, which one has measured--not seven times, but once?

Instead, our party formers are mired down by circle narrowness.

THE QUESTION OF A PLAN

In the first place party building has been conducted virtually without plan. In fact the only plans put forward have been for back room arrangements among this or that "leading circle"--from the Revolutionary Union's (RU) National Liason Committee to the Revolutionary Wing's Party Building Commission. After the collapse of the Liason Committee and under attack for its economist line of building the mass movement, RU declared party building the central task "for a brief period" and during that period failed to put forward a plan to consolidate the revolutionaries in our movement. Without a plan, the Workers Viewpoint Organization (WVO) declares the formation of the party a "settled question". As the only "true Bolsheviks" the "Leninist Core" of the Revolutionary Wing probably has no need for a plan. And the October League (OL), which alone has openly put forward a plan, was wrong from the jump--form the party first and elect a temporary leading body, then draft a program and call a party congress. The Organizing Committee's hesitations and delays are the inevitable result of working without a plan and of drawing together what has not been consolidated. Party forming can only take place once the tasks of party building have been accomplished. We cut only once we have measured.

The plan required is not a plan for calling a Congress but for building a party. In this the experience of the Bolshevik party, summed up by Lenin in WHAT IS TO BE DONE remains, as we have insisted, our best resource. The essential elements of Lenin's plan are applicable to our movement today not because the conditions between tsarist Russia and the imperialist U.S. are the same, which they are not, but because the character of the party we intend to build is the same.

PREPARE THE CONDITIONS

What are the conditions which must be prepared in order to forge that party out of the scattered circles of advanced forces that comprise our movement?

According to Lenin the plan required needed to accomplish two things: (1) it must point the way to a demarcation of trends between revolutionary Marxism and opportunism, and (2) it must point to the steps for organizing the scattered circles of the movement into a network of professional revolutionaries capable of unfolding all-embracing nationwide political agitation.

A demarcation of trends is the first step in building any proletarian party. It is a question of setting the independent political life of the proletariat on its feet. Only by demarcating itself from trends of revisionism, chauvinism, petty bourgeois liberalism and all forms of opportunism can a party of the proletariat lead the fight for the independent class interests of the proletariat. For Lenin this was a fight against every form of bowing to spontaneity and especially against the influence of economism. For our own movement it is a question of settling accounts with modern revisionism and rooting out the economist and social democratic influences which arise spontaneously in our work and are the chief means by which revisionism penetrates our ranks.

Secondly, Lenin insisted on gathering the resources of the Russian movement and establishing real contacts between the scattered circles of revolutionary forces, giving their work a stable, systematic, nationwide and professional character. He

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WORKERS' PENSIONS, BANKERS' PROFITS

With an estimated \$200 to \$300 billion held in private pension funds, pension funds have become very big business.

These funds which hold the money contributed by employers and employees to pension accounts in order to provide an income on retirement, have in fact become the largest single source of investment capital available to the US bourgeoisie.

According to the laws of monopoly capitalism, the overwhelming majority of these funds will necessarily come under the domination of a handful of the nation's largest banks. For example, according to the figures of Senator Lloyd Bentsen from Texas, of a total of \$200 billion in private pension fund assets, over \$130 billion are managed by two dozen banks or life insurance companies. Out of 4000 bank trust departments throughout the country qualified to hold pension funds, 80% of pension money is held by the trust departments of 15 of the largest banks. Of the 1800 life insurance companies, only 12 of the largest manage 79% of total pension assets.

Thus between them, this handful of banks and life insurance companies control 80% of the \$200 billion held in pension funds.

This has created concern among some elements of the bourgeoisie because of the tremendous concentration of financial power involved in this control over the largest single source of available investment funds. As a result, Senator Bentsen, a former small businessman and small banker who ran briefly for the Democratic nomination for President last year, has introduced the Pension Investment Act of 1977. This legislation seeks to limit the stock holdings of the large financial institutions which manage pension funds.

Bentsen shares the small businessman's fears of the concentration of capital in the hands of the large finance capitalists. In his remarks to the Senate, he said:

"We must never allow our financial institutions to control American business to the extent that such institutions control German or Japanese

businesses, for example."

The facts he lays out show the extent of that control:

"Morgan Guaranty's trust and investment divisions bought 38.5 percent of all the shares of Kaiser Aluminum and Chemical in 1975...In that same year Morgan also accounted for net purchases of Potlatch amounting to 31.4 percent of total trading, 30.8 percent of International Nickel, 28.6 percent of Crown Zellerbach, and 24.1 percent of Manufacturer's Hanover... (In 16 instances) Morgan accounted for more than 20 percent of the buying and selling (of stocks on the NY stock exchange.)

Fascism is the open terrorism of the most reactionary section of finance capital. It is the concentration of financial control reflected in Morgan Guaranty's control of pension funds that constitutes the economic foundation of fascism. By gaining control of only a relatively small percentage of the stock of a given business, the finance capitalists can exercise virtual complete control over that business.

Such concentration disrupts the allocation of capital throughout the economy according to the market forces of free competition and substitutes instead the decision of a few financial monopolies which in turn leads to economic stagnation and decay. Furthermore, such massive concentration of investment power squeezes small business out of the capital market. Business men which need "risk" or "startup" capital to start their business cannot obtain it, there by reinforcing and developing the domination over the economy of the largest financial and industrial concerns and destroying small businesses.

Bentsen's legislation wants to put "curbs" on all this, but his efforts are anemic. They reflect the slight economic and political power of the non-monopoly sectors of the bourgeoisie. His legislation is like trying to stop a flood by sticking your finger in a hole in a dike that has never been built. His legislation does not attack the concentration of pension

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assets under the control of a few giant financial institutions, but instead sets a 5% limit on the amount of stock the trust departments can invest their pension holdings in.

Another sector of the economy concerned about the massive growth of investment capital in pension funds is the small farmer. Farm organizations have taken up protest against the plans of the stock firm of Merrill Lynch and Continental Illinois Bank to invest pension funds, not in common stock, but in agricultural land. The reasons for this are easy to understand: stocks over the last few years have been stagnant, while agricultural land has tripled in value. Continental Illinois Bank proposes a scheme called Ag-Land 1, a fund which would buy \$50 million in farm land and lease it back to farmer tenants. The units of investment would then be sold to pension funds.

Continental Illinois Bank proposes that the operating income on these farms should, like the earnings of pension fund investments in common stock, be tax exempt or that taxes on them be deferred. This would obviously create an enormous competitive advantage for those who control "Ag-Land 1" and would drive more and more small and middle farmers out of business.

In any event, the Ag-Land scheme is likely to drive up the price of agricultural land and cause a corresponding steep hike in food prices.

According to the courts, your interest in a pension fund is a "security", like a share of stock. Now we know why - it is managed by the monopoly

The strength and significance of monopolies is vastly increased by the new role which banks play under imperialism.

Finance capital Banks were at first intermediaries in making payments. As capitalism develops the credit activity of banks increases. The bank deals in capital. It takes capital from those capitalists who cannot for the moment make use of their capital themselves, and gives capital to those capitalists who need it at the moment. The bank collects all kinds of income and places it at the disposal of the capitalists.

With the development of capitalism, banking establishments just as industrial enterprises, unite, their size and turnover continually increase and they accumulate tremendous amounts of capital. The greater part of this capital belongs to others, but the bank's own capital grows apace. The number of banks becomes less, smaller banks close or are swallowed up by larger competitors. But the size of banks, the magnitude of their capital, increases. It is sufficient to give the following example. From 1890 to 1912 the number of banks in England decreased from 104 to 44, but their capital increased from £430,000,000 to £850,000,000. Now a bank can no longer limit its activity to granting short term loans to industrialists when they need them. In order to utilize the tremendous accumulations of capital the banks come into closer contact with industry. The bank now invests a certain part of its deposits directly in industry by granting long term loans for the expansion of production, etc.

The joint-stock company gives the bank the most convenient form for investing its capital in industry. All the bank must do is to obtain a certain amount of stock in the enterprise. Having gained control even of only one-third of the total stock the bank acquires complete control of and unlimited power over the whole enterprise.

Joint-stock companies thus serve as links between the banks and industry. The banks, in their turn, help the growth of stock companies, taking upon themselves the reorganization (reconstruction on new principles) of privately owned enterprises into stock

companies and the establishment of new stock companies. The purchase and sale of shares take place more and more through the medium of banks.

The law of concentration and centralization is manifested with particular force in banking. In the biggest capitalist countries from three to five of the largest banks control the entire network of banks. The other banks are either practically subsidiaries of those giants, their independence a mere outward show, or they play an entirely insignificant role. Those giant banks are closely welded to the monopolist industrial associations. A merging or fusion of bank and industrial capital is taking place. Bank capital fused together with industrial capital is called finance capital. The amalgamation of bank capital with industrial monopolies is one of the distinctive attributes of imperialism. That is why imperialism is called the epoch of finance capital.

The growth of monopoly and the growth of finance capital put the entire fate of the capitalist world in the hands of a small group of the biggest capitalists. The merging of bank capital with industrial capital brings about a situation where the biggest bankers begin to manage industry and the biggest industrialists are admitted into the bank directorates. The fate of the entire economic life of every capitalist country lies in the hands of a numerically insignificant group of bankers and industrial monopolists. And the arbiter of economic life is the arbiter of the whole country. Whatever the form of government in bourgeois countries in the epoch of imperialism, practically, a few uncrowned kings of finance capital have full power. The official state is only the servant of these capitalist magnates. The solution of the vital problems in all capitalist countries depends on a small group of the biggest capitalists. In their own greedy interests these magnates of capital bring about great conflicts between entire countries, incite wars, suppress the labour movements and crush uprisings in the colonies.

--From POLITICAL ECONOMY, by A. Leontiev Pages 203-206

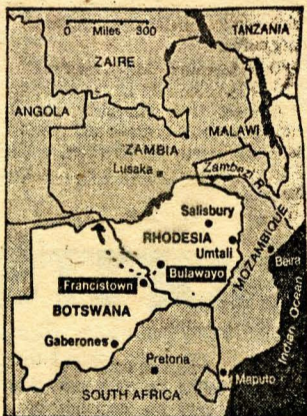
ly capitalist bourgeoisie for their profit. For you it is at most a bare living when you retire some day, constantly undermined by inflation. For the finance capitalists it means big profits right now.

The further and further concentration of all aspects of the economy under the control of a handful of financial capitalists is an inevitable law of capitalism. Political forces attempt

ing to speak for small business men or small farmers can do nothing to stop that motion. Of all the classes and strata in the US society, only the working class, organized under revolutionary direction, has the power to trade finance capital blow for blow, and overturn the rule of this handful of uncrowned kings who thrive on the misery of the masses.

ZIMBABWE: freedom fighters enlist

Reports from Botswana tell of hundreds of young patriots of Zimbabwe who are crossing the border each week in order to volunteer for guerrilla fighting. The word has been spread throughout the western provinces that freedom fighters are needed and as a result people are pouring across the border to volunteer. Planes are leaving Botswana almost daily with hundreds of volunteers for training camps in Zambia.



A good example of this revolutionary spirit, distorted by reports from the Rhodesian regime that were parroted by the bourgeois press in the US, was the departure of 400 students who left a mission school 10 miles from the Botswana border to volunteer as a group. The Smith regime tried to claim that the students had been kidnapped by the guerrillas. But when the busses were sent over the border to take them back, only 53 agreed to go home with their parents.

At the same time, Botswana radio reported 10 desertions from the white Rhodesian army in the month of December. One of those who deserted, a white American, said that over 30% of the white Rhodesian army is made up of foreigners.

An army of colonialist mercenaries can never withstand the might of an armed people fighting for national liberation. Total victory, national liberation and self determination for Zimbabwe is surely not far off.

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insisted on the necessity for a struggle against amateurishness to accomplish this task. In his own case, this meant overcoming amateurishness which left young revolutionaries victim to the wholesale raids of the political police under the tsarist autocracy. In our case we have not only the political police, but also liberalism - which is the product of the traditions of legality and due to the influence of the bribed sector of the labor aristocracy and the petty bourgeoisie - which also disrupts our revolutionary work, keeps our forces scattered and dispersed, and can only be overcome by an attack on amateurishness.

Lenin also fought for the systematic organization of revolutionaries in closely knit groups and repudiated the view that this meant an isolation from the mass movement. On the contrary, he insisted that the tightly disciplined systematic character of these groups was the basis for all-embracing, nationwide political agitation:

"Nadezhdin is confused because he imagines that troops, which are being systematically organized, are engaging in something that isolates them from the crowd, when as a matter of fact they are engaged exclusively in all-sided and all-embracing political agitation, i.e. precisely in work that brings closer and merges into a single whole the elemental destructive force of the crowd and the conscious destructive force of the organization of revolutionaries." (WHAT IS TO BE DONE, Peking Edition, p.214)

DEMARICATION OF TRENDS

How do our party formers measure up to these criteria?

On the question of demarcating trends, none of the organizations primed to declare themselves a party has offered to the movement for discussion and debate a draft party program setting forward in a precise way their views. The RU, which offered a draft shortly before its party congress paused neither for open debate in the movement over its draft nor responded to criticisms of it (THE COMMUNIST, v. I, no. 11, August, 1976) and as a result did not take up the task of fighting for the hegemony of its programmatic views, using the program to demarcate trends and to unite the movement on that basis. Given its line it could not--and after all, party building was only for a "brief period". Like RU others also have apparently relegated the program to an administrative chore to be accomplished prior to the party congress, but have not openly offered to the movement a draft for struggle.

The demarcation of trends in our movement has suffered from this lack of precise struggle over programmatic views. No one has spoken more about demarcation than the former members of the Wing and yet

their polemics have principally concerned the justification of splits and circle narrowness without contributing to the presentation or resolution of programmatic questions essential to our revolution. For its part the Organizing Committee of the OL, which has been in existence for almost a year, has yet to take up the struggle of trends at all. WVO counterposes the burning questions of our movement to party building by complaining about a discussion of the Chicano National Question, demanding instead to "discuss Party Building"; the OC counterposes the burning questions of our movement to party building by maintaining a discrete silence, in "party building forums" encouraging revolutionaries to join "the unity trend" without any presentation of views on key problems.

A NETWORK OF REVOLUTIONARIES

The goal of Lenin's plan for a network of revolutionaries was to "gather and organize all the revolutionary forces for a general attack upon the autocracy and for the leadership of a united struggle." (WITBD, p. 205) Notice the significance of the words Lenin emphasizes. All the revolutionary forces and not the forces of only one region or circle; a general attack and not one narrowed by or limited to the spontaneous demands of the trade union or mass movement; and a united struggle, and not one fragmented among innumerable "leading circles".

Which one of our party formers has gathered and organized according to these criteria? The task of winning hegemony over and uniting the scattered forces and circles of our movement has not been genuinely posed. RU claimed it had all the "genuine" forces mobilized and OL, WVO and the "Leninist Core" follow in succession. But none have gathered and organized with a vision to match the breadth of our movement. Lines of demarcation are drawn not between Marxism-Leninism and opportunism but between circle adherents and others. The network is established on that basis. Party building tasks are reduced to circle size rather than stretching our circles to meet the demands of our tasks.

What explanation can we give for this? First and foremost, there has been the lack of a leading line. No "leading circle", in spite of self-proclamation, has put out a stable and comprehensive line around which the scattered forces of our movement could unite and then take up the tasks actually required to fight in a protracted way for the hegemony of that line. Secondly, the low level of theoretical development of the movement as a whole has been a barrier. Confusion and vacillation persist on fundamental questions of line around which we must unite. Third there has been a lack of mutual contact and common work, a narrowness overall in our approach to organizational and political questions, and

even where there is a common line there has been little effective common work.

We are to build a systematic organization of professional revolutionaries closely merged with the masses, but from the press of the party formers there has been little summing up of the experience of factory cores and nuclei or guidance on the day to day tasks of factory groups. There has been virtually no discussion of questions of inner party life both in the sense of internal organizational questions such as reporting, discipline, criticism, self-criticism, etc.-- questions of guidance which can serve to draw a local collective toward a common center--nor in the sense of contact among revolutionary forces of our movement. None of them has spoken to the question of inner party publicity. Yet in his ISKRA writings, Lenin more than once emphasized the need to take up organizational problems in the press.

Nor have any of the party formers established hegemony in the task of leading a network of revolutionaries in unfolding the work of all embracing, nationwide political agitation. In the first place, stable and consistent political agitation depends on training our cadres and the masses by means of political exposure and the exposure which have appeared in the movement press have not yet attained the thoroughness and scope covering the broad range of issues and the full analysis of class forces required for a general attack on the political power of the bourgeoisie. Lacking such political exposures we cannot have political agitation that is all-embracing and nationwide in scope as well as stable and consistent in principle.

Secondly, agitation remains basically local and regional for the overwhelming majority of our movement. Even the possibility of nationwide political agitation seems abandoned by the "Leninist Core" which is prepared to declare the party of a region. Throughout the movement the narrowness associated with local and regional work has yet to be overcome. While efforts have been made at nationwide political agitation, these remain limited and inconclusive. They do not reflect a gathering of all our forces and common political lines around business and the ERA, for example, which have been struggles of fundamental importance to our movement but which have not given rise to corresponding agitation. Our responses have been local. Nor have we responded to the nationwide attacks of the bourgeoisie - as for example, around the energy crisis and unemployment. The problems of narrowness and economism are revealed in the failure of our political agitation to raise the political struggle of the proletariat for state power - as, for example, in the RCP's support for the

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Sadowski campaign which pursued trade unionist rather than communist politics.

The question of preparing the conditions for party forming is not a question of time. The process can be either fast or slow. The question is whether we address ourselves to the tasks required. It is a generation since the CPUSA degenerated into a revisionist party. If we fail to prepare the conditions for the formation of the party, we will not accomplish our goal in another generation.

THE MATERIAL BASIS OF OUR ERRORS

The errors of the party formers on party building reflect the incomplete rupture between Marxism-Leninism and the petty bourgeois democratic trend which persists in our movement. In COLLAPSE OF THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL Lenin explains that the "European type" of development of the labor movement leads to an alliance between the intelligentsia and other sectors of the petty bourgeoisie, the liberal bourgeoisie and the labor aristocracy based on the morsels of loot obtained from Great Power privileges which fall from the table of monopoly capital into the laps of sectors of the working class and the petty bourgeoisie. The Russian form of this was Economism and its successor, Menshevism. Lenin wrote:

"During the Russian Revolution, it (Menshevism) pursued tactics that objectively meant the dependence of the proletariat on the liberal bourgeoisie, and expressed petty bourgeois opportunist trends" (Lenin's COLLECTED WORKS, v.21, p.222)

In the spontaneous upsurge of the 1960's, such petty bourgeois opportunist trends emerged closely allied with the liberal bourgeoisie, the labor aristocracy and the reformist Black bourgeoisie. Feigning distinctness from or opposition to the "C" PUSA, this trend was able to cover itself with the cloak of Marxism Leninism and ally itself with the developing Marxist Leninists for two reasons: first the opportunist trend came forward in the correct struggle against ultra-"left" adventurism and terrorism - an example of the truth brought forward by the Chinese comrades that the struggle against one error covers another. Second, the alliance could continue through the period where Marxist-Leninists saw their principal task as building the mass movement because this trend could cover its true colors, as in Lenin's day, with "references to the masses" in order to justify opportunism.

THE RUPTURE OF THE MARXIST-LENINIST AND PETTY BOURGEOIS TRENDS

But as the Marxist Leninist line on the necessity of building a proletarian party of a new type began to be understood by genuine communists, and as the significance of this line began to be grasped, it meant changing the character of our work, it meant a strenuous struggle to overcome our amateurishness and backwardness and to become professional revolutionaries. As we realized the extent of our backwardness in the face of the magnitude of our tasks in all areas - theoretical, political and organizational - the ability of the petty bourgeois democratic trend to cover itself in alliance with Marxism-Leninism began to rupture. To the extent that we grasped the significance of party building as our central task, it forced a break with the methods of organization and style of work that allowed coexistence with the opportunist trend of the petty bourgeoisie to be maintained. The split in the BWC was an example of that. The effort to break with the loose, decentralized social democratic character of the organization, to break with the narrowness of its political work and to break with a limited view of its tasks brought forth an attack from movement forces in the organization who wanted things to remain as they were. They wanted party building, because there was no longer a cover without it, but they wanted it without its revolutionary content. That is the essential aspect of the Workers Congress (M-L)'s sum-up of the split in the BWC. It was in defense of the principles of orthodox Marxism Leninism on the relationship of consciousness to spontaneity, on the relationship of centralism and professionalization (Bolshevize The Panks!) to primitiveness and playing with democracy, on the national scope of our tasks against a narrow focus on local concerns, and above all on the role of a national newspaper in relationship to undertaking the struggle for party building, that our organization was formed.

The underlying significance of the fact that in seizing on party building as our central task, our movement has been confronted with a proliferation of organizational efforts at party declaring rather

than planned conscious efforts at preparing the conditions for the formation of a party, means that the rupture between Marxism-Leninism and the petty bourgeois democratic trend has been incomplete. The tendency in our movement to follow the line of least resistance even on our central task, to bow to spontaneity even on party building, to proceed without plan, program or a gathering of forces - all this reflects the persistence of a liberal petty bourgeois opportunist trend in our midst that would, as Lenin teaches, cast away the living soul of Marxism.

"The tendency in our movement to... bow to spontaneity even on party building, to proceed without PLAN, PROGRAM, or a GATHERING OF FORCES - all this reflects the persistence of a liberal petty-bourgeois trend in our movement that would, as Lenin teaches, cast away the living soul of Marxism."

JOINING THE CONTINUATIONS COMMITTEE

Our own contributions to these errors have been as serious as any and we can only advance the slogan "prepare the conditions" on the basis of a self-criticism. As much as any organization the BWC justified the notion that party forming could be accomplished without preparation of the conditions. Above all this characterized the effort of the BWC to whip honest forces into motion around the bankrupt line and program of the Communist League's (CL) National Continuations Committee (NCC). Not only did we call for forces in our movement to join the NCC in the face of open contradiction of the line of the CL and the interantional line of Marxists Leninists led by the Communist Party of China, as well as CL's open conciliation with Soviet revisionism, but after joining the NCC the BWC declared that there was only one road to the Party and that was to join CL in a party congress in September of that year (1974). There was no question here of a demarcation of trends - no demarcation on modern revisionism, the most fundamental question; no question of gathering a network - the Continuations Committee had done it; and no question of all-embracing nationwide political agitation. Presumably such matters would be resolved after the party congress.

Objectively the BWC's role in this was to lend the neo-revisionist forces of the CL a legitimacy and influence in our movement that they had never earned and readily lost. In addition, the BWC's decision compromised the good contributions the organization had made to the struggle against the Revolutionary Union (RU) on the Black National Question and around Party Building. Most important it contributed to the notion that we could have a party soon and easy -

This error reflected the serious ideological weaknesses of the BWC leadership and its organizational instability. No sooner had the line that party building is the central task been grasped than we were supposed to have a party. Movement "hype" was substituted for recourse to the science that would deepen our understanding of the conditions that needed to be prepared and on that basis further our grasp of the line through its application in practice.

The state of affairs surrounding the BWC's error of joining the NCC was bound to lead to confusion and demoralization and, after the break with CL, directly precipitated the split in the BWC. The decision to join the NCC had fatally compromised the BWC's efforts, correctly charted, to deepen the line on party building by taking up the task of bolshevizing the organization.

"WE WILL JOIN ANY CALL"

The WC (ML) was a product of the split in the BWC. We fought for and defended the tasks of bolshevization, but made the error of justifying the decision of the BWC to join the NCC. The confusion which had resulted from the BWC's motion on the question let loose a resurgence of longstanding social democratic tendencies. Forces arose which sought not only to repudiate the error made regarding the NCC, but also the gains which had been made in the struggle around party building. These forces came forward

to liquidate the organization's efforts to establish a national center, to perpetuate the autonomy of the local districts, to liquidate THE COMMUNIST and get back to building the mass movement. They sought to perpetuate the former character of the organization. A basic cover for this retrograde offensive was an attack on the decision to join the NCC as a "left" error. The WC (ML) was founded in a repudiation of this attack on all fronts and a defense of the positive gains that had been made in the struggle against economism, liberalism, petty bourgeois democracy and other

the notion that the party was just a step away rather than pointing to the necessity for every comrade to develop his independence, bearings and ability to contribute to and evaluate the struggle to prepare the conditions.

The error itself was clearly the most flabby sort of petty bourgeois liberalism. We didn't need to decide whether joining the NCC or any other party forming motion was right or wrong because our duty was to join any such call. Its source was our own failure to insist on and carry out in a thorough way the rupture between Marxism-Leninism and the petty bourgeois opportunist trend masquerading as Marxism-Leninism.

The error also compromised our ability to give guidance and leadership around the party building motion of the RCP and around the OL/OC where there was vacillation and wavering in the ranks of leadership based on our failure to apply a systematic method of evaluation which looks first to whether the cloth had been measured before we decide to cut. The question is based on scientific criteria and we hesitated in taking up the science. Thus, although we correctly identified the fundamental errors in OL's original plan (see THE COMMUNIST, v.II no. 4, 1975), we remained trapped by the proposition that we must join any call.

Most important, the notion that we should join any call weakened our grasp on the development of the ISKRA plan. While the experience of Lenin's ISKRA to which we appealed was nothing if it was not a plan to prepare the conditions for the formation of the party, our ability to apply that line came into conflict with the line that we would join any call. The undercurrent of that line conflicted with the correct course we had charted. We did not grasp firmly enough the main link - a single, common nationwide newspaper of the ISKRA type as a means to gather the resources of the Leninist trend of our movement, to draw clear lines of demarcation and to organize a network of agents capable of giving revolutionary direction to all-embracing, nationwide political agitation.

TEACH ON THE BASIS OF MISTAKES

Our revolutionary party will be measured - as any Marxist Leninist party - by its ability to teach on the basis of its mistakes. Our movement will be measured by its ability to repudiate the party forming efforts which are now reducing party building to circle size and by its ability to take up instead in the disciplined spirit of revolutionary Marxism the task of preparing thoroughly the conditions for establishing a party to lead all the revolutionary forces of the US for a general attack on the monopoly capitalist state in a united struggle.

PREPARE THE CONDITIONS!

Suscribe To THE COMMUNIST

Consistent with the plan of the WORKERS CONGRESS (M-L) to fight for an ISKRA type newspaper for the Leninist trend as the main link in the fight to prepare the conditions for a new Communist party, we call on all comrades and friends to send in topical exposures, polemics, letters, criticism and reports on their work and their use of THE COMMUNIST. Every comrade should strive particularly to develop worker correspondents as an essential means to link the newspaper with the working masses.



Subscription rates are \$4.25 per year.

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'ROOTS' - liquidating national struggle

Over 130 million people watched the TV novel "ROOTS" written by Alex Haley. "ROOTS" was the most successful show in television history. There is no surprise as to the success of "ROOTS" because it retells the dramatic history of Afro American people during the period of slavery and the initial period of Reconstruction in a lively mass style. But although "ROOTS" was done in a mass style, it was not in the interests of the masses. Mao Tsetung says about art: "In the world today all culture belong to definite classes and are geared to definite political lines. There is in fact no such thing as art for art's sake, art that stands above classes, art that is detached from or independent of politics." (Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art, Selected Works, v. III, p. 86. "ROOTS" is geared to the political line of the bourgeoisie.

Even though "ROOTS" did serve to popularize aspects of the barbarity and horror of the slave system, "ROOTS" still serves the ruling class of this country and helps it to maintain its power. One can only read the bourgeois press to see the declarations of the various bourgeois politicians--both black and white to see that they are well pleased.

Haley's book was originally begun in a time of mass rebellion in 1964 under the title "Before This Anger." But although a product of struggle, its purpose is to divert the struggle. Its goal is to retell Black history from a bourgeois perspective and to divert Black people from getting at the roots of their common oppression.

ROLE OF IMPERIALISM

Imperialism divides the world into oppressor and oppressed nations and the system of imperialism means the ever-widening extension of national oppression. The history of Black people in the US is the history of a people drawn first into a vicious and barbarous slave system and then forged into a nation on the territory of the Black Belt with the collapse of slavery and the failure of Reconstruction. Black people on this territory constituted a majority closely tied to the land linked by common bonds of history, language, economy and culture. But the nation which developed was an oppressed nation, dependent upon and enslaved politically, militarily and culturally by US imperialism. Historically the economic basis for the oppression of the Afro American nation was the seizure of land in the Black Belt territory of the South by southern plantation owners in alliance with US finance capital. The export of oppressor nation capital to the Black Belt deformed and retarded the development of that area. The impoverishment of the peasantry coupled with the strict segregation enforced by Jim Crow laws and KKK terror led to a migration of Black people off the land into the cities throughout the US in search of work. For that reason the special oppression and superexploitation of Black people throughout the US

has its roots in the national oppression and domination of the territory of the Black Belt South by US imperialism.

The common history of the Afro American people has been a protracted and turbulent struggle against national oppression and for equal rights.

The heart of this struggle is the struggle of the Afro American nation in the Black Belt South for national liberation. The purpose of "ROOTS" is to obscure the historical constitution of the Afro American people into a nation in the Black Belt South and to liquidate the struggle for national liberation and self determination. The rising upsurge of the Black masses requires that the bourgeoisie use the weapon of culture to retell Afro American history from a perspective that will liquidate the struggle for national liberation, up to and including the right of political secession for the Black Belt South and limit the struggle for equal rights by dulling the consciousness of Afro Americans to the true character of their common oppression. Yet it is only by taking up the struggle in alliance with the struggle of the multi-national proletariat of the US for socialism that the Afro American people can rip out the root

of their common oppression.

"ROOTS" liquidates the struggle for national liberation by belittling the right of the people to the land they have earned through their labor. In the last episode, the Senator, a carpet-bagger says, "whoever owns the land, controls the people-so goes the land, so goes the people." But the lesson portrayed by the drama contradicts this. When Chicken George and his family trick the vigilantes and escape to Tennessee, the trick is on them, for the Senator still owned the land and there would be plenty of other Black people who would be forced to work to survive because they did not own the means of production, above all the land, which was stolen from them with the betrayal of Reconstruction. In order for Black people to be liberated the solution is not for one family to escape, but for the oppressed masses to seize the land and territory of their historical homeland. But the solution put forward in "ROOTS" is the bourgeois solution pushed by every reformist and revisionist--there is no need to fight for land and territory in the Black Belt South because the national question is dying away as the Black masses escape to jobs and opportunities in the rest of the country.

"ROOTS" liquidates the struggle for national liberation by throwing up an individual solution to the question of the liberation of an oppressed people. The major theme was Kunta Kinte's individual struggle to be free. While he was constantly plotting to escape, this was contrasted with the passive mobs of Black people portrayed as basically content to make the best of a bad situation. On the other hand Kunta Kinte, because of his desire for freedom, was characterized as "that crazy African with his run away blood." But this is a bourgeois distortion of history, for Black people have never taken their oppression peacefully. There were constant acts of resistance, some organized, some spontaneous. But what "ROOTS" did was spread the illusion that one man could be free while his nation and his class were in bondage.

"ROOTS" reinforced the theme of passivity and capitulation in the face of oppression by putting forward a bourgeois view of the family. The family was seen as

a refuge for retreat rather than a base for struggle. It was a source of compromise rather than of strength. After Kunta was married to Bell and once Kizzy was born, Kunta did not try to escape. Basically as long as their family was together, slavery was at least tolerable. It wasn't until Kizzy was sold off and Bell died that Kunta returned to plotting his escape and freedom again.

When "ROOTS" does portray mass resistance, rather than individual escape, it is always portrayed as the unruly violence of a tyrannical mob--an uncontrollable lashing out at any white. For example, Nat Turner was mentioned, but he was seen as someone negative who killed indiscriminately. Once George and his wife found one of his men, dead with several bullet holes in his chest. They commented that the dead man had a peculiar smile on his face. That was all that was mentioned. Never was it hinted that Turner represented organized resistance in a democratic struggle. Instead, it was left to us to believe that he and his men had some kind of maniacal escapade until they got stopped. Mao writes: "Writers and artists of the bourgeoisie in its period of reaction depict the revolutionary masses as mobs and themselves as saints, thus reversing bright and dark." (Yenan Talks on Literature and Art, S.W., v. III, p. 278.)

Another example occurs when the son of the blacksmith Tom wants to kill the vigilantes for whipping Tom. He is consoled by a young white woman who tells him "it ain't right to kill--where will it end? Does that mean you will kill me?" Of course this was not on Tom's mind, but what Haley does is to portray all anger that could lead to violence as indiscriminate and uncontrollable and to equate the reactionary deeds of the vigilantes with all whites. A revolutionary stance would have made clear that the rage was justified and taken the position, yes, these men should be punished and made an example.

CHARACTER OF THE ENEMY

Just as "ROOTS" attempts to substitute escape for the path of righteous resistance, it also attempts to obscure the character of the enemy. "ROOTS" gave the impression that all whites had an interest in maintaining slavery and then the national oppression of the Afro American nation. They were viewed as racist cutthroats. The majority, however, had neither slaves nor plantations and in fact had a common enemy in the slaveowning and landowning class. This was manifested through common armed offensive of whites and Blacks in the Abolitionist movement led by John Brown (who was never mentioned in the movie). And after the Civil War this unity of ex-slaves and poor whites continued in organized armed resistance to the violence of the KKK and reactionary landowners.

The slave system is also portrayed from a bourgeois point of view which sees it is based not on a system of class oppression, but caused by evil human nature. And instead of the real savagery of the slave system where the average life expectancy was 7 to 9 years and people were literally worked to death from "can't see in the morning to can't see at night" we get a slave who has easy accessibility to the master, who shares his ups and downs, etc.

The enemy is either "all white people" or "evil human nature" in order to liquidate the struggle against an exploiting class which owns the means of production. When the enemy is not identified as a class and the people are portrayed as passive or in disarray, this is done to hide class struggle. As the Comintern pointed out almost 50 years ago, the "stench of the slave market" persists today to expose the rotten threads that connect oppressor nation capitalists who exploit Afro American people today and the class of slave owners whose ruthless exploitation they inherit. "ROOTS" tries to divert our attention from that target.

SUMMARY

These major points: (1) the liquidation of the history and democratic struggle of a nation for national liberation and self determination, including the belittling of the role of land, (2) the passivity and lack of resistance in the face of oppression, portraying individual escape rather than class war under slavery or national liberation after Reconstruction as the means to liberation, (3) portraying collective resistance as uncontrolled and tyrannical mob violence, (4) the bourgeois role of the family in holding back struggle, (5) the refusal to identify the enemy as an exploiting class in control of the means of production--all these points represent the views of a particular class, the ruling class. The drama attempts to divert the masses of American people from the primary issue of class and national struggle to the secondary issue of one man's life. It attempts to turn history from a foundation of action into an object of passive entertainment.

The desire of the working class and the oppressed nationalities to know their history is growing. Thus, "ROOTS" will open the door for other stories of defiance and resistance--Nat Turner, the underground railroad, etc. But none of them, done by writers like Haley, will call into question the capitalist system or the power of the capitalist state.

Culture is a critical arena of class struggle. Mao said: "To overthrow a political power, it is always necessary to first of all create public opinion to do work in the ideological sphere. This is true for the revolutionary as well as the counterrevolutionary classes." "ROOTS" demonstrates the importance the bourgeoisie places on preserving its hegemony in the field of art and culture. As revolutionaries we cannot pretend to overthrow the rule of the bourgeoisie without breaking the grip of the bourgeois culture on the working and oppressed masses.

Revolutionary artists must base their work on Marxist science and point the direction forward for the masses. We need artists who will portray the historical constitution of the Afro American nation and the development of the struggle for national liberation and self-determination. We need artists who can show the fighting alliance that exists between the struggle of the black nation for self-determination, the struggle of all oppressed national minorities for equal rights and the struggle of the multinational proletariat for socialism.