On Democratic Centralism

The first two articles of this series on democratic centralism dealt with five major points: the Marxist-Leninist party as the vanguard detachment of the working class; the party as a formal organization with its laws and discipline; the party as universal leader of the united front; the party's need for a mass base in the working class; and centralism and voluntary discipline as the principal features of internal party organization. The third article will conclude our brief study of this important subject.

Regular collective criticism and self criticism are necessary for the party to evaluate its line and practice. Criticism-self criticism is inseparable from fundamental scientific method.

Capitulation idealism and mysticism believe that subjectivity is primary over reality and that individualism and the party Discipline is unnecessary. Everything, Marxist-Leninism teaches us the opposite: the real world is primary and that we must analyze with scientific method. We must critically reflect on the way in which the party develops. Therefore, human knowledge can never totally escape reality. Science can come close to reality, but the world's development is always at least a step ahead of its reflection in men's minds.

For example, before Columbus sailed to the New World, men had believed the earth flat for thousands of years. The earth did not suddenly become round with the voyage of the Nina, the Pinta, and the Santa Maria. Columbus merely discovered something already materially true. When Copernicus proved the existence of the solar system, the earth and sun did not suddenly change their relation to each other. His scientific breakthrough served to transform human understanding of another reality. Marx did not create surplus value: he could not have discovered this hidden key of capitalist profit if it were not already part of the world in which he lived. Such is the universal nature of science and scientific experimentation.

Only practice is "perfect" knowledge can never be. This is the profound scientific explanation for criticism-self criticism as standard operating procedure in a democratic-centralist revolutionary working class party. We know we will make mistakes. They are unavoidable. We criticize and stand in our corrections. We learn from our errors, minimize them in the future, improve our practice, and become better fighters for socialism.

CRITICISM-SELF CRITICISM MUST take place within the general guidelines of democratic-centralist theory. It should conform to the following principles:

a) Every member, leader, and collective of the party must constantly evaluate their practice. Criticism-self-criticism must always exist within the limits of formal party collectives.

b) The purpose of criticism is to build the party and, by elimination of contradictions, to bring the party closer to the masses. Criticism should be sharp, but objective. It must be given dialectically, taking into account the strengths and weaknesses of the comrades, leader, or collective criticized.

c) Criticism should distinguish between primary and secondary weaknesses. It should separate primary from secondary errors and concentrate on political questions rather than merely institutional issues.

3. Personal criticism, which is sometimes necessary, must always be related to the political work of the party. Leaders and collectives must take into account the law of uneven development in evaluating cadre and their practice.

d) Criticism should always be received objectively even when it is given subjectively. Leaders especially should strive to ferret out the kernels of truth in all criticisms, including those presented in a one-sided manner. The process of criticism-self criticism should strengthen the party and mutual confidence among comrades and leaders.

e) CRITICISM-SELF CRITICISM IS NOT for the infant Soviet Union when it came under attack for the world bourgeois, the international battleground against nazi barbarism, the worldwide struggle for the Vietnamese working class. And as a few.

THE BASIC PREMISE OF PROLETARIAN internationalism is that the interests of the worldwide working class outweigh the narrow immediate interests of any party or group. Internationalism is best summarized by the great Marxist slogan: "Workers of the World, Unite!"

To achieve this goal, formal organization is needed. Newly emerging parties must eventually be welded together into an international movement that functions with the discipline of a single party. The task will be long and difficult, but it is necessary and possible. The major aspect of carrying it out now is strengthening the struggle against revisionism, which is most intense two centers are in the Soviet Union and China. The emphasis must be on the internal struggle against revisionism and its betrayal of the universals of Marx- Leninism as long as and as absolutely as necessary. The Progressive Labor Party, the Canadian Party of Labour, and other forces are attempting to play a role in this process.

These, then, are the outstanding characteristics of democratic centralism: the vanguard revolutionary party, the party as a formally organized entity, the party as leader of all united fronts, base-building for the party and socialism, centralism as the party's organizational basis. Dilemmas of criticism-self criticism, and proletarian internationalism in program, tactics, and organization.

DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM IS PRECISELY the contradiction that enables the working class to move forward as one army, with one flag, toward one aim: the future of our people and the rebirth of society. The alternative is isolation, fragmentation, and the agony of capitalism's shameless talk.
Campaign To Free D. Vered

TORONTO, Canada—While Zionists have been clamouring for the release of Jewish mathematicians from Soviet prisons, Dan Vered, an Israeli Jewish mathematician teacher from Haifa has been imprisoned for three years in Ramlah Gaol, Israel.

His crime: Leading the flight against Israeli racism, the Zionist master race theory that attacks Arabs and dark-skinned (oriental) Jews; and organizing to end the slaughter of Arab and Jewish workers in the mid-east.

Dan Vered is a revolutionary communist. He was organizing and building a party to unite Israeli workers in the fight for socialism. Dan Vered and his comrades were leading the struggle for a revolutionary solution to the great powers' use of Arab and Jewish workers as cannon-fodder in their fight for the oil resources of the mid-east.

In 1972, Vered and his whole group were arrested. The Israeli state framed them as a "spy ring" for the capitalist Syrian government. In the midst of a hysterical scare-campaign led by the government and the press in Israel, all the members of the group were convicted—without the slightest shred of evidence of spying being produced by the state prosecutor. Dan Vered was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment.

While U.S. bosses blame "foreign" workers for job losses here, outfits like Ford are the real cause of mass unemployment. For instance:

Once fascism was established in Brazil, it destroyed all unions and outlawed strikes. Workers who attempt to organize for higher wages and better conditions are executed. Taking advantage of these fascist conditions, Ford set up a plant at Taubate, Brazil to manufacture engines for its Pinto assembly plant in St. Thomas, Ontario. Meanwhile, Ford workers in Lima, Ohio (who used to make these engines) were laid off. Why was Ford able to pull this off? Because under fascism in Brazil, auto workers are forced to submit to a wage of less than $1.50 an hour or be shot.

Where does Michigan State come in? The Brazilian police who enforce fascism have been trained at a program organized at Michigan State. And the final link in this chain of unemployment, exploitation and fascism is the fact that the president of Michigan State sits on the Board of Directors of Ford! That's precisely the role of the university under capitalism: to help enforce the bosses' power at home and abroad.

When PLP calls for international working-class unity to defeat fascism and imperialism, the target is not 10,000 miles away. They're right here in the auto company headquarters and on the campuses. So when we fight the racist cutbacks and tuition hikes, when we fight mass layoffs with strikes, we're fighting the same enemy that is using fascism abroad—and will use it here—to exploit us all.

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Our class constitutes the many; the bosses, the few. We are bound to win—once we weld ourselves together under the leadership of the party, as Lenin wrote.

"In its struggle for power, the proletariat has no weapon more powerful than organization. Disunited by the rule of anarchy competition in the bourgeois world, ground down by forced labor for capital, constantly thrust back to the 'lower depths' by utter destitution, savagery, and degeneration, the proletariat can become, and inevitably will become, an invincible force only when its ideological unification by the principles of Marxism is consolidated by the material unity of an organization which will weld millions of toilers into an army of the working class."

Lenin's words were prophetic when he wrote them. They are true today. Democratic centralism and a revolutionary socialist outlook enables a small party to grow until it can lead the fight to smash an apparently omnipotent enemy; it transforms the weak into the strong, the ruled into the rulers of society, and, eventually, society itself. No force in the world can withstand the power of a united working class, operating as one organism, with the single-minded purpose of establishing its own dictatorship. Rockefeller's millions, the terror tactics of the bosses' state, and the desperate war-course of international capital, all appear as wretched creatures on the shores of history, waiting to be drowned and washed away forever by a giant tidal wave. Our class will become that tidal wave. Join the Progressive Labor Party!