

Proletarian Unity League

2, 3, Many Parties of a New Type? Against the Ultra-Left Line

Chapter 6: Putting an End To the "Left" Sectarian Period D. A Practical Precondition to Party-Formation: Roots in the Working Class

The unity that we seek is a communist unity founded in a common world outlook. That unity can come about only with the overthrow of the "left" line in the communist movement. Therefore we raise the propaganda slogan, "Defeat 'left' sectarianism so as to unite the Marxist-Leninists and win over the class vanguard." Uniting the separate Marxist-Leninist forces **follows** the defeat of "left" sectarianism; organizational unity cannot precede ideological unity, and ideological unity cannot be had until we break the stranglehold of "left" sectarianism. With the unity of Marxist-Leninists achieved, the work of gaining the best elements of the working class for communism will develop by leaps and bounds. Without that unity, work among the working class suffers continued sabotage at the hands of the "left" line.

To defeat "left" sectarianism, we must attack not only the party-building "branch" but also the ideological "roots" of "left" opportunism. The defeat of the "left" danger, however, requires more than ideological struggle against it, or united front activities aimed at its wrecking tactics. As long as the social base of the communist movement and its relationship to the working class movement stays the same, ultra-leftism will find a ready audience among U.S. Marxist-Leninists. And this brings us to a practical precondition for the formation of a Marxist-Leninist Party, which concerns the class character of the newly-founded Party.

The formation of some Communist Parties has taken place before the class vanguard accounted for a very important percentage of their ranks. Though the delegates who attended the first Congress of the Chinese Communist Party had established ties to the proletariat, they themselves were mainly intellectuals. In many other cases, the founding Congress did regroup a significant number of both leading and rank and file worker Party members (the early CPUSA,(1) the CPGB, to some extent the RSDLP, etc.) From these examples, we can see that a proletarian class **composition** has no historical necessity for the formation of a Marxist-Leninist Party.

But though a certain fixed proportion of workers is not required to form a Marxist-Leninist Party (keeping in mind the distinction between party-formation and the vanguard party), this does not mean that the relationship between the communists and the working class movement has little bearing on party-formation. Quite the contrary: a certain state of fusion of Marxism-Leninism with the working class movement must exist before party-formation has any meaning. For reasons of principle and for reasons arising out of the concrete situation in the U.S. communist movement, we will have to establish an organic link between Marxism-Leninism and the workers' movement before party-formation heads up the orders of the day.

In an earlier chapter, we defined party-building as the fusion of Marxism-Leninism and the workers' movement, a fusion which proceeds in and **through** the Communist Party. **Through** the Communist Party: the formation of a Party serves as the instrument for the rallying of the vanguard in such numbers that it may truly be considered the advanced detachment of **the working class**. But first of all in the Communist Party: without that fusion, you may have a revolutionary trade union movement or a propaganda association, but you do not have a Communist Party. Lenin emphasized the point when he spoke of uniting

"the Russian working-class movement and Marxist socialism, which has already begun to take root in Russian soil, into one integral whole, in order that we may combine the Russian revolutionary movement with the spontaneous upsurge of the masses of the people. Only when this contact has been established can a Social-Democratic working-class party be formed in Russia..." (CW 4, p. 325)

Until a definite level of "contact" is reached, the formation of a Party is at best a signboard, a declaration of intentions, and at worst a factional play.

Parties arise as the instruments of the struggles of definite classes. Only the struggles of the working class can produce the elements necessary for the formation of a Marxist-Leninist Party, though not all those elements come from the class itself. The Party is composed of cadre from all classes capable of finding their bearings under any situation and providing revolutionary direction to the working class movement. Without such cadre, those whom the Korean Communists have called "steadfast pivots," we lack the forces with which to form any Party worthy of the name. The working class brings forth these pivots both directly from its own ranks and indirectly, through the remolding of revolutionary intellectuals, students, and other individuals from outside the working class. In both cases, the existence of sufficient seasoned cadre to form the Party depends on

tempering in the heat of class struggle, in the most intimate contact with the working class movement. Until this organic connection with the working class movement is established, until the communists have firm roots in the proletariat, no real Party can emerge.

The present-day communist movement has drawn its main forces from the middle strata, even within the national movements, and not from the proletariat itself. Incipient revolutionary movements frequently but not inevitably spring from these sources. Though individual advanced workers have joined different communist groups in not insignificant numbers, the working class vanguard in its **mass** has so far remained a secondary factor in the party-building effort.

The Most Consistent Anti-"Left" Force

As discussed earlier, the present social base of the communist movement, drawn largely from the middle strata, provides favorable soil for the growth of ultra-leftism. While the initial anti-"left" forces will come from within the existing communist groups themselves, we do not believe that they can carry the struggle against "leftism" through to completion. The fight against "left" sectarianism means a fight for a Party spirit. And "Party spirit is the concentrated expression of class character." (CPC, **A Proposal Concerning the General Line of the International Communist Movement**, p. 42) A consistent Party spirit can only arise and maintain itself when that Party or organization is based in the proletariat. Insulated from the various currents of the communist movement, the advanced workers in individual communist groups can, like the membership as a whole, temporarily fall prey to "left" opportunist leadership. In its mass, however, the vanguard of the working class forms the most consistently anti-"left" force, the most reliable bulwark of Marxism-Leninism. It can also play that role because of its intimate knowledge of the isolation of communism from the struggles of the working class. A strategy for party-building, for the defeat of "left" sectarianism, requires the transformation of the proletarian vanguard from a secondary factor, largely outside the communist movement, into the motive and leading force in the struggle for the Party.

"Our view, which we have found confirmed by long practice, is that the correct tactics in propaganda are not to entice away a few individuals and memberships here and there from one's opponent, but to work on the great mass, which is not yet taking part in the movement....And if one could only get the masses without their **local leaders** it would still be all right. But one always has to take along a whole crowd of these leaders into the bargain who are bound by their previous public utterances, if not by their previous views, and now must prove above all that they have not deserted their

principles but that on the contrary the Social-Democratic Workers' Party preaches true Lasalleanism." (Marx and Engels, **Selected Correspondence**, pp. 344-45)

The experience of the international communist movement substantiates the need for enlisting ever wider sections of the working class in the struggle against deviations of all types. As regards the struggle against "left" sectarianism, the early history of the Korean communist movement has a particular relevance. A "left" adventurist line dominated the early Korean movement. Of its factionalism, the Comintern representative Otto Kuusinen wrote, "There are parties that have become...notorious in this respect [factional strife; ed. note] such as the Polish and American parties, but the record belongs to the Korean factions." (**op cit.**) To defeat the ultra-left deviation and eradicate the permanent state of factional crisis among Korean Marxist-Leninists, the Comintern (2) repeatedly laid stress on two tasks: achieving basic ideological unity and rebuilding the communist movement on a working class basis:

"The first of these tasks is a conscious and constant formation of Communist cadres with sound Communist views, the working out of a genuine Communist Conception and a true scientific Marxist-Leninist mode of thinking; it is about time to discard the superficial pseudo-scientific phrases which have so frequently been our stock in trade till now..." ("**Resolution of the ECCI on the Korean Question**")

"The ranks of the Communist Party of Korea have in the past consisted almost exclusively of intellectuals and students. A communist Party built on such foundations cannot be a consistently Bolshevik and organizationally sound Party. The first task of the Communist movement of Korea is therefore to strengthen its own ranks. The problem of improving the social petty-bourgeois intellectual composition of the Party and the lack of contact with the workers constituted until now one of the main causes of the permanent crisis in the Communist movement in Korea..." (**Ibid.**)

As in the Korean example, part of the urgency of strengthening the ranks of the U.S. communist movement arises from the fight against a "left" danger based in "newcomers from non-proletarian classes." Given the strength of ultra-leftism in the U.S., rectification—if it is not to be a voluntarist and idealist rectification—must draw support from a class base as well. This is no abstract call for "more" workers, or some "magic percentage" which will qualify an organization as a Party. But the general task of constructing a true class Party has an even greater urgency today, when the Marxist-Leninists need the working class to get out of the ultra-left rut we have fallen into. The more durable and entrenched the "leftist" disease, the

more important a place will the presently non-communist masses of politically active workers have in the formation of the Party.

To the propaganda slogan discussed above, we therefore add a second: "Win over the class vanguard so as to defeat 'left' sectarianism and unite Marxist-Leninists!" Again the unity of Marxist-Leninists can only follow the defeat of "left" sectarianism. That unity will certainly push forward communist work among the working class. But the broadening and deepening of our fusion with the class vanguard cannot await Marxist-Leninist unity, for the simple reason that we cannot get that unity without overcoming our isolation from the workers' movement, without enlisting a large section of the presently "non-Party" vanguard in the struggle for the Party. To defeat "left" sectarianism, we must strengthen our class ranks. We suggest these two propaganda slogans because they point to the interrelationship of our strategic tasks in a way that the far more familiar ones—"Marxist-Leninists Unite! Win the Vanguard to Communism!"—do not. (3)

Although they constitute a potentially decisive force in the struggle against "left" opportunism, the politically active workers will not spontaneously take up that cause. And communist groups which are not committed to that struggle will obviously not seek to win them to it. Nor will an attempt to unite all who can be united against sectarianism, against the splitting and wrecking of the communist movement, somehow uproot the semi-anarchist ideological basis upon which "left" sectarianism rests. Acting anti-sectarian and propagating communism among the working class simply will not suffice. To defeat the "left" danger in our movement, we need an organized force dedicated to that task. For lack of a better term, we will call this force an anti-"left" tendency.

Footnotes

1. Even though it included a large majority of workers, the membership of the early CPUSA did not reflect the multinational composition of the proletariat.

2. Kim Il Sung made a similar analysis of the early Korean movement:

"General Kim Il Sung had clearly recognized the basic defects of the communist movement in the 1920's which failed to organize the communist ranks with the workers and peasants as the core and to rally the masses under one banner for lack of a correct revolutionary line, and which failed to

achieve the unity of the Communists in their ideology and action because of a severe factional strife." (Baik Bong, **Kim Il Sung**, I, p. 347)

And:

"The main reason why the Communist Party in the 1920's underwent agonizing splits, failing to perform its mission as political leader of the working class, lay in the fact that it lacked the steadfast pivots consisting of seasoned Communists." (**Ibid.**, pp. 333-34)

3. The determination of our slogans at this time has to take account of the existence of the various forces dedicated to reversing the hegemony of the ultra-left line over the communist movement. Owing to the breadth of the present anti-"left" reaction, we give priority to the first of these two slogans: defeat "left" sectarianism so as to unite the Marxist-Leninists and win over the class vanguard. But if for whatever reason the current attempts to organize a tendency at once anti-revisionist and anti-"left" opportunist should fail, then the relation of these slogans would reverse, and the second have priority: win over the class vanguard so as to defeat "left" sectarianism and unite Marxist-Leninists.