Some Lessons of July 4th

The Mass Line in Political Struggle

But it is not enough to simply conduct propaganda or demonstrate against bourgeois rule. As Mao Tsetung wrote in "On Contraction," the universal contradiction resides in the contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, for example, universal to the period of capitalism, is resolved in the thousand and one forms of particular struggles that it takes. It is by taking up these actual struggles that the masses can begin to grasp the fundamental contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. This is true in the political arena, as in the economic.

Like it says in the article "Mass Line Is Key to Lead Masses in Making Revolution" (first in a series on the mass line) in the December 15 issue of Revolution, "Pro-"paganda, while an extremely important vehicle for the Party to lay out the whole situation and the scientific basis for revolution to the masses, cannot by itself develop revolutionary understanding. For that the masses must have their own experience." Experience, in this case, of actual struggle against the bourgeoisie in the political arena and struggle against actual political attacks.

Now, let’s get back to the Commissar Manifesto that "The bourgeoisie finds itself involved in a constant battle. At first with the proletariat; later on, with those portions of the bourgeoisie itself, whose interests have become antagonistic to the progress of industry; at all times with the bourgeoisie of other countries. In all these battles the Party must keep itself in a position to appeal to the proletariat, to ask for its help, and to drag it into the political arena." (emphasis added) By "dragging the proletariat into the political arena," by undertaking to whip up a storm of patriotism around the Bonnetorial in order to win the masses politically to a program of sacrifice and support for their war, the bourgeoisie provided the working class and its Party a sharp opportunity: to call into question the direction on which they have set society, and even their entire political rule.

The bourgeoisie’s Bonnetorial offensive represented an opportunity as well as an attack. But an opportunity is one thing and using it is another. Our plan to join with others in rallying thousands of workers in Philadelphia on July 4th saying "We’ve Carried the Rich for 200 Years, Let’s Get Them Off Our Backs!" is mature through the whole thrust of the bourgeois’ campaign. While they talked about "one nation, united," we prepared to plant the banner of the proletariat to expose their unity celebration as an attack by their class on the working class and masses of people.

What we wanted to do ran straight against what they wanted to do. But they did not understand this and were determined that our demonstration would not take place on that day. Into this struggle they threw the organized forces of their state—permit denials, court orders, a request for 10,000 troops, Senate hearings, etc. Their press repeated their slanders. They used hidden agents in the communities, the left marching, and so on, to attack us from within. And they used the opportunist coalition’s planned march on the same day to try to isolate us and paint us as “radicals.” “If we oppose a coalition to march outside Center City” the other coalitions’ behavior showed that it was only to try to stop us from organizing, or to act as “individual heroes,” substituting their own actions for the struggle of the masses, or initi- atively, to show that the struggle of the masses are not able to “take up.” In fact, it could not be the action of a handful. We did not have the ability to act in such a way. To reduce the thing to a battle between two “superpowers”—as slugging it out with the bourgeoisie to appeal to the masses to redound to the bourgeoisie, only end in defeat. We were able to use the people’s understanding of the Bonnetorial as a political attack coming from the capitalist class and state and draw them into the battle. Not against Philadelphia Mayor Rizzo but our class against theirs.

To this we had to correctly analyze the real attack coming from the bourgeois state. We must understand what the masses and apply the mass line. The Party had done this in a preliminary statement for the demonstration and formulated the slogan: “We’ve Carried the Rich for 200 Years, Let’s Get Them Off Our Backs!” in the first place. Now we had to repeat the process to deepen our understanding at each step of this battle. We found early on that the slogan really spoke to people’s aspirations. But people often dog it as a “good idea” without grasping immediate relevance of their lives and role in it. In particular, most people didn’t understand before joining the Bonnetorial as a political attack. We could see this in the early days of the campaign when we tended to take it out as a great time to “do the dog and Philadelphia.” And though we did help people see the Bonnetorial as an attack to sharpen class struggle and come up with the bourgeoisie’s political answers—“national unity, national security, national defense”—brought to you by the same people who bring you war, unemployment, discrimination, exploitation and city cutbacks.

Correct Tactics Bring Out Political Line

By correctly analyzing the nature of the attack and the mood of the masses and applying the mass line we were able to sharpen politics to make the overall political line come alive. We made the battle sections in every sectors of the masses and enable them to act.

The first step in the Union’s campaign was the Bonnetorial. The very idea of thousands of unemployed workers standing themselves on the doorsteps of the bourgeoisie’s celebration of the “American Way of Life” and of the jobs that are being cut to live the whole life of unemployment. Every attempt to prevent us setting up it only made us stronger and sharpened our class consciousness to more opportunities to expose the nature of capitalism. The four days of activities leading up to July 4th—demonstrations at an unemployed office, a city hospital scheduled to be shut down, even more militant and new role.

In Philadelphia we printed a poster to put on aban- doned houses: “1/3 of construction workers unemployed, 50,000 abandoned houses, 50,000 families needing homes this Holiday. Another Bonnetorial Meeting. Bonnetorial 200 Years of Rule by the Rich”—another way to brand the idea the bourgeoisie was selling with the mark of the class. At the same time we had to guard against the right error of reducing the demonstration into simply a protest. In particular, however, it was a fact that the organizers carried out the political heart of the slogan “We’ve Carried the Rich for 200 Years, Let’s Get Them Off Our Backs!”

In the beginning the City simply denied our permit requests and ignored the demonstration, hoping to mini- mize its effect. But taking it outside to the masses, making it a broad social question and winning support...
Continued from Page 15
For, it forced them out from behind this wall of silence. Growing support in Philadelphia and evidence of organizing going on around the country, made it clear that thousands of workers were preparing to go up against their sham national unity on the Fourth. The last straw was the actions of the over 15,000 troops and brand us as "terrorists," for example, in an attempt to physically deter any radical or non-violent action that we might take. To do this successfully, however, we must make a correct analysis of the attempt, the situation and the mood of the workers. When the troop request hit the papers we already had a number of advanced forces who had come forward to say that a visible advance action should be taken on whether or not it will accomplish its goals summarized by Mac Tastung," which are that: "The masses in general are completely conscious. The questions that are generally being raised are: the active, the immediate and the relatively backward. The leaders must therefore be flexible in understanding the different and determine the nature of the active element around the leadership and must rely on them to raise the level of the immediate elements and to work with the relatively backward. We had to apply the mass line on the troop request, for example. When we did this we found that the response of the immediate was two-sided. People still united with the troops and were outraged at the troop request and decried of permit. But in the absence of any clear idea about who was behind this thing" they had real questions about whether the Coalition was looking to manipulate people into a confrontation with the police and the observation of the police. Even more they feared that Mayor Riozzi would provoke something we wanted it or not. We correctly analyzed that this was the real aim of the troops, an attempt to call us out and physically prevent our demonstration, but a political attack to isolate us from the masses by branding us as a bunch of terrorists and that we had to do everything possible because the situation around the Bicentennial didn't offer the bourgeoisie complete freedom to smash us. They instead reinforced the need of the workers to be organized and needed to win the support of the people. They could bring the forces of the working class on their day of "freedom," the Fourth of July, and without explanation.

Still Available in Limited Quantities
200 Years is Long Enough
And the Time has Come for the Working Class to Overthrow the Capitalist System and Build a Completely New Kind of Society

This pamphlet by the RCP, with a rundown on U.S. history and its true issues, is only available in limited quantities.

50¢ from RCP Publications

REVOLUTION
December 1976

out to the masses as a part of the larger political attack on the working class. And by doing this on the basis of a correct analysis, we would be able to create "favorable new conditions" for struggle. To the point that when we finally tried to build a mass rally at one point and the police confiscated our supplies, the mass response was not that we were disrupting but spontaneous outrage: "This is an intolerable number!" —and a growing understanding of the battle.

This same process of provisioning the masses with repetitive experiences led to a variety of experiments throughout the toe-to-toe battle. Around the question of unemployment and the Ten City, around the demonstration tactics, around the police harassment, around the press, around the people's forever present contingencies and demands from the streets —and each of these we found dozens of ways to take questions to the masses and release their initiative by exposing the basis for action, condemning the political attack of the bourgeoisie around the 4th.

Isolating Enemy Agents at Close Quarters

The open attacks by the bourgeoisie were followed by some from the workers. Like the way it says in the second Mass Line article, "It is bound to happen in any decisive struggle of agents of the bourgeoisie surface work and to understand the mood of the masses we were able to "create favorable new conditions" for struggle. To the point that when we finally tried to build a mass rally at one point and the police confiscated our supplies, the mass response was not that we were disrupting but spontaneous outrage: "This is an intolerable number!" —and a growing understanding of the battle.

The open attacks by the bourgeoisie were followed by some from the workers. Like the way it says in the second Mass Line article, "It is bound to happen in any decisive struggle of agents of the bourgeoisie surface work and to understand the mood of the masses we were able to "create favorable new conditions" for struggle. To the point that when we finally tried to build a mass rally at one point and the police confiscated our supplies, the mass response was not that we were disrupting but spontaneous outrage: "This is an intolerable number!" —and a growing understanding of the battle.

The open attacks by the bourgeoisie were followed by some from the workers. Like the way it says in the second Mass Line article, "It is bound to happen in any decisive struggle of agents of the bourgeoisie surface work and to understand the mood of the masses we were able to "create favorable new conditions" for struggle. To the point that when we finally tried to build a mass rally at one point and the police confiscated our supplies, the mass response was not that we were disrupting but spontaneous outrage: "This is an intolerable number!" —and a growing understanding of the battle.

The open attacks by the bourgeoisie were followed by some from the workers. Like the way it says in the second Mass Line article, "It is bound to happen in any decisive struggle of agents of the bourgeoisie surface work and to understand the mood of the masses we were able to "create favorable new conditions" for struggle. To the point that when we finally tried to build a mass rally at one point and the police confiscated our supplies, the mass response was not that we were disrupting but spontaneous outrage: "This is an intolerable number!" —and a growing understanding of the battle.

The open attacks by the bourgeoisie were followed by some from the workers. Like the way it says in the second Mass Line article, "It is bound to happen in any decisive struggle of agents of the bourgeoisie surface work and to understand the mood of the masses we were able to "create favorable new conditions" for struggle. To the point that when we finally tried to build a mass rally at one point and the police confiscated our supplies, the mass response was not that we were disrupting but spontaneous outrage: "This is an intolerable number!" —and a growing understanding of the battle.

The open attacks by the bourgeoisie were followed by some from the workers. Like the way it says in the second Mass Line article, "It is bound to happen in any decisive struggle of agents of the bourgeoisie surface work and to understand the mood of the masses we were able to "create favorable new conditions" for struggle. To the point that when we finally tried to build a mass rally at one point and the police confiscated our supplies, the mass response was not that we were disrupting but spontaneous outrage: "This is an intolerable number!" —and a growing understanding of the battle.

The open attacks by the bourgeoisie were followed by some from the workers. Like the way it says in the second Mass Line article, "It is bound to happen in any decisive struggle of agents of the bourgeoisie surface work and to understand the mood of the masses we were able to "create favorable new conditions" for struggle. To the point that when we finally tried to build a mass rally at one point and the police confiscated our supplies, the mass response was not that we were disrupting but spontaneous outrage: "This is an intolerable number!" —and a growing understanding of the battle.

The open attacks by the bourgeoisie were followed by some from the workers. Like the way it says in the second Mass Line article, "It is bound to happen in any decisive struggle of agents of the bourgeoisie surface work and to understand the mood of the masses we were able to "create favorable new conditions" for struggle. To the point that when we finally tried to build a mass rally at one point and the police confiscated our supplies, the mass response was not that we were disrupting but spontaneous outrage: "This is an intolerable number!" —and a growing understanding of the battle.

The open attacks by the bourgeoisie were followed by some from the workers. Like the way it says in the second Mass Line article, "It is bound to happen in any decisive struggle of agents of the bourgeoisie surface work and to understand the mood of the masses we were able to "create favorable new conditions" for struggle. To the point that when we finally tried to build a mass rally at one point and the police confiscated our supplies, the mass response was not that we were disrupting but spontaneous outrage: "This is an intolerable number!" —and a growing understanding of the battle.

The open attacks by the bourgeoisie were followed by some from the workers. Like the way it says in the second Mass Line article, "It is bound to happen in any decisive struggle of agents of the bourgeoisie surface work and to understand the mood of the masses we were able to "create favorable new conditions" for struggle. To the point that when we finally tried to build a mass rally at one point and the police confiscated our supplies, the mass response was not that we were disrupting but spontaneous outrage: "This is an intolerable number!" —and a growing understanding of the battle.

The open attacks by the bourgeoisie were followed by some from the workers. Like the way it says in the second Mass Line article, "It is bound to happen in any decisive struggle of agents of the bourgeoisie surface work and to understand the mood of the masses we were able to "create favorable new conditions" for struggle. To the point that when we finally tried to build a mass rally at one point and the police confiscated our supplies, the mass response was not that we were disrupting but spontaneous outrage: "This is an intolerable number!" —and a growing understanding of the battle.

The open attacks by the bourgeoisie were followed by some from the workers. Like the way it says in the second Mass Line article, "It is bound to happen in any decisive struggle of agents of the bourgeoisie surface work and to understand the mood of the masses we were able to "create favorable new conditions" for struggle. To the point that when we finally tried to build a mass rally at one point and the police confiscated our supplies, the mass response was not that we were disrupting but spontaneous outrage: "This is an intolerable number!" —and a growing understanding of the battle.

The open attacks by the bourgeoisie were followed by some from the workers. Like the way it says in the second Mass Line article, "It is bound to happen in any decisive struggle of agents of the bourgeoisie surface work and to understand the mood of the masses we were able to "create favorable new conditions" for struggle. To the point that when we finally tried to build a mass rally at one point and the police confiscated our supplies, the mass response was not that we were disrupting but spontaneous outrage: "This is an intolerable number!" —and a growing understanding of the battle.

The open attacks by the bourgeoisie were followed by some from the workers. Like the way it says in the second Mass Line article, "It is bound to happen in any decisive struggle of agents of the bourgeoisie surface work and to understand the mood of the masses we were able to "create favorable new conditions" for struggle. To the point that when we finally tried to build a mass rally at one point and the police confiscated our supplies, the mass response was not that we were disrupting but spontaneous outrage: "This is an intolerable number!" —and a growing understanding of the battle.

The open attacks by the bourgeoisie were followed by some from the workers. Like the way it says in the second Mass Line article, "It is bound to happen in any decisive struggle of agents of the bourgeoisie surface work and to understand the mood of the masses we were able to "create favorable new conditions" for struggle. To the point that when we finally tried to build a mass rally at one point and the police confiscated our supplies, the mass response was not that we were disrupting but spontaneous outrage: "This is an intolerable number!" —and a growing understanding of the battle.

The open attacks by the bourgeoisie were followed by some from the workers. Like the way it says in the second Mass Line article, "It is bound to happen in any decisive struggle of agents of the bourgeoisie surface work and to understand the mood of the masses we were able to "create favorable new conditions" for struggle. To the point that when we finally tried to build a mass rally at one point and the police confiscated our supplies, the mass response was not that we were disrupting but spontaneous outrage: "This is an intolerable number!" —and a growing understanding of the battle.