## II

## THE IDEALIST CONCEPTION OF HISTORY PUT FORTH

## BY THE "NEW COMMUNIST MGVEMENT" AND ITS

## IMPLICATIONS FOR PARTY-BUILDING IN THE USA TODAY

To begin to answer this question, we must start with the second defect of "earlier historical theories" to which Comrade Lenin referred in The Teachings of Karl Marx. Lenin said that they "ignored the activities of the masses."

All the organizations and groups in the "new communist movement" uphold the proposition that Marx and Engels and bourgeois intellectuals are the force which created Marxism. In doing so they bury the creative initiative and the historic mission of the working class. They fly in the face of the teachings of Marx and Engels who stated and constantly fought for the proposition that the working class would achieve its emancipation by its own effort! Marx and Engels never added a qualifying phrase that the thinking for the revolution would require the services of bourgeois intellectuals.

In his excellent pamphlet, 'Socialism is Built By the Masses, the Party Makes Them Conscious, " Comrade Hoxha underscores the point that it is the class and the masses which make history, while the party serves to guide the class and the masses to victory He says, "Socialism is built by the masses of the people, the directives are implemented by the masses of the people, the correctness of the Party is ensured by the participation of the people, and the work to correct mistakes is also carried out with the participation of the people. Nothing can be done without the people. This is one of the great Leninist principles . . . ." (page 13). Comrade Hoxha quotes Lenin who says, "Socialism cannot be established by the minority, by the party. It is established by the tens of millions of people, when they learn to do this work themselves. We see our merit in the fact that we are trying to help the masses to get down to this job themselves immediately, and this is something that cannot be learned from books or lectures." (page 4) Comrade Hoxha goes on to point out, "The Party line is the line of the working class. It reflects its aspirations and efforts for the realization of the tasks common struggle and work. In actual life, this line is still better understood, formed, tempered and tested by the party itself, by the class, by the masses. Whoever separates these factors from one another, slips and deviates from the line. The people who slip tend precisely towards separating these factors." (page 77)

Yet, separating these factors, the party and its leaders on the one hand, from the class and the masses on the other, is the line and the policy that permeates the theory and practice of the "new communist movement". From the incorrect, anti-Marxist propo-
sition that great individuals are primarily (or solely) responsible for the creation of the science of Marxism, of the science of the revolutionary proletariat, from their idealist conception of history, this and a number of other incorrect and extremely harmful antiMarxist conclusions are drawn.

Incorrect Conclusion No. 1: Based on the idealist conception of history, the ideas themselves have no requirement of being tested in the crucible of the revolutionary struggle against imperialism, against international capital. And therefore these ideas are more and more stamped with the mark of abstraction from life, and become more and more merely formal slogans, chants and declarations emptied of any substance from the standpoint of the proletarian revolutionary cause. Consequently the debates which have been waged by the various groups in the "new communist movement" have contained concepts such as "Party-building takes place place on the ideological plane", "The advanced workers", "For or against Mao Tse-Tung", "Unity Trend", "Two line struggle", "Organization is key vs. Political line is key", "Anti-revisionist theoritical premises", "Fusion" etc., etc.-all divorced from the class struggle. This has been particularly true of the groups in the so-called "Revolutionary Wing" most of whom, as the October League points out, have determined party-building to be the only task for Marxist-Leninists and, on this basis, attacked any form of communist participation in the mass movements as "reformist". However, the October League, for example, since it shares the idealist conception of history with the "Revolutionary Wing" is unable to effectively expose the idealist core of the "Revolutionary Wing's" "flighty" Marxism. In this way the October League, et al, lend respectability to the"Revolutionary Wing" verbiage and actually encourage the Party-building debate to take place on the ideological "plane", i.e. up in the clouds.

Incorrect Conclusion No. 2: Based on the idealist conception of history, those who possess the ideas and are the creative force in society should organize themselves into a party which will create the new society on the basis of the superiority of its ideas over those of the old society. Hence, the approach to partybuilding that it is a subjective process whereby through intellectual discussion divorced from material reality, the petty bourgeois intelligentsia prove to each other that "my" group is correct and "your" group must join my group. Hence, the extreme arrogance and sectarianism that marks the Party-Building movement. Comrade Engels tells us that the results of all the Party-Building forums with the name-calling, haggling over petty issues while all being fundamentally in agreement but incorrect on the key issues leads the PartyBuilding movement down a "dead end street."
"To all these, socialism is the expression of absolute truth, reason and justice, and has only to be discovered to conquer all the world by virtue of its own power. And as absolute truth is independent of time, space, and of the historical development of man, it is a mere accident when and where it is discovered. With all of this, absolute truth, reason and justice are different with the founder of each different school. And as each one's special kind of absolute truth, reason and justice is again conditioned by his subjective understanding, his conditions of existence, the measure of his knowledge and his intellectual training there is no other ending possible in this conflict of absolute truths than that they shall be mutually exclusive one of the other. Hence, from this nothing could come but a kind of eclectic, average socialism. . . Hence, a mish-mash allowing of the most manifold shades of opinion; a mish-mash of such critical statements, economic theories, pictures of future society by the founders of different sects, as excite a minimum of opposition; a mish-mash which is more easily brewed the more the definite sharp edges of the individual constituents are rubbed down in the stream of debate, like rounded pebbles in a brook.

To make a science of socialism, it first had to be placed upon a real basis." (p. 43-44, Socialism: Utopian and Scientific)

Let Avakian of the RCP, Klonsky of OL, Nelson Peery of the CLP, and Jerry Tung of the WVO read Engels and weep; for Comrade Engels has precisely described the Party-Building forums, propaganda activity,etc., of the RCP, OL, CLP and WVO. Where are the sharp dialectical materialist political positions of RCP, OL, CLP and WVO? What they have given us is indeed average socialism.
Incorrect Conclusion No. 3: Since the great ideas of the great individuals are everything (or at least everything of consequence) and the great activity of the great mass of the population is nothing (or at most of little consequence), and therefore, the party is everything and the class and masses are nothing, then the party's primary activity among the masses, its mass strategy, is to recruit to the party and the strategy of the party for achieving victory is the final evolution of the "Correct Line," the "great formula," the "master plan" or some such nonsense. Of course given this strategy the "advanced workers" to be recruited must be the cream of the petty bourgeois intelligentsia or at least members of the petty bourgeois intelligentsia. Under no other circumstances can any of those workers who exhibit determination, courage, self-sacrifice in concrete, material battle against the class enemy, be allowed to enter the "Party" or to rise within its ranks, except if they also happen to possess the "superior" knowledge.

Hence, there is no real concern paid by these organizations to the overall class composition of their "Party". For example, in the lead article in the very first People's Tribune (Vol. 1, No. 1) after the

CLP's founding congress, entitled "CLP Holds Founding Congress Build the Party!" they said, while paying lip service to the class composition of the party, "The present demands that we send our cadre in all directions and into all classes." And this in the chief oppressor nation in the world! The CLP concludes this article with "At all times and in every struggle our leading slogan should be: BUILD THE PARTY!" It is the"number's game"-anyone can join - shout a few slogans and you're one of them. White northern petty bourgeois liberals are especially desirable, for they make no real demands on the organization and easily agree with whatever the "grand master", the current "master" interpreter of the "masters"(Marx, Lenin etc.), has to say about every subject. And these petty bourgeois have plenty of contact with others just like them. Much financial backing can be found with which to put out material containing the ideas of the "masters" and the "grand master" and of the various positions which the particular organization puts forth as the embodiment of the "masters'" ideas, and so they can recruit more petty bourgeois liberals and in this way ultimately they'll win everybody to agree with their ideas and join their "Party." And that will be the revolution! Amen!

Incorrect Conclusion No. 4: The concrete ongoing struggle of the masses is nothing, of no consequence, and unworthy of study, analysis, and responsible participation by the $r$-r-revolutionary vanguard. Hence concrete analysis of concrete conditions are only intermittently and superficially, if ever, assessed by the organizations of the "new communist movement".

Hence, a Marxist Leninist mass line, "from the masses to the masses", is impossible to implement. In our fairly extensive experience in mass work with the OL, and RCP, their whole participation in the class struggle has been for the narrow purpose of recruitment to the party and its "line". In summing up their early period of trade union work (up to 1972), the October League said "The main achievement of this early period of factory work was the recruitment of a strong group of advanced workers into the OL."(Call, Aug. 2, 1976). Nowhere does the OL state how they objectively advanced the cause of the proletarian revolution in the US during this period! These organizations have practically no conception of the role of leadership that a genuine Marxist-Leninist line and organization can and must play in the ongoing struggle of the class and masses against capital. They have no basis for discovering in practice who the real "advanced workers" are. Objectively, they play a disruptive role in the class struggle and consequently they provide no basis in the material life of these "advanced workers", for the "fusion of socialism" with the working class movement". But on the contrary, they cast mud on MarxismLeninism, on the cause of communism in the eyes of those very same "advanced workers" who must be won (through the concrete struggle against capital) to the cause of communism and to the party.

Let us look, for example, at the consistently infantile left errors of the OL and the RCP in shop work.*Where unions exist in shops, both the OL and RCP prematurely denounce the present union leadership without having led the masses of workers through any sufficient experience in the trade union struggle against capital as a basis for exposing and driving out trade union mis-leaders. Nor have they laid the conditions for establishing a united front with all the workers and leaders possible in this struggle. Consequently they provide no material basis for recruiting the "Advanced workers" beyond the limited trade union struggle into the revolutionary struggle against imperialism and into the party.

The RCP has the "confrontation" approach. With its tiny "advanced" army, it declares war on trade union leaders without having prepared the masses of workers for battle and without regard for what the conditions of battle are. For example, if the union is in the middle of a bitter strike against the company, the RCP cadre raise ultra-militant slogans and demands far beyond what the workers as well as the leadership are willing to fight for at the time.

The OL even more clearly blames all the problems on the local union leadership, and calls for its overthrow, without leading the fight of the people against the company themselves and thus providing a principled basis to throw out the union misleaders and bureaucrats because they stand in the way. The OL sets up its ideal of an immaculate "Workers' Union" much like that conception criticized by Lenin in Left-Wing Communism which, as Comrade Lenin describes it, "only" requires that the worker be for the dictatorship of the proletariat and the Soviet system! In total opposition to the teachings of Lenin on the trade union question and in basic agreement with the Economists of 1902, the OL, even includes within its "Principles of Unity" for party-building the following "task of the communists in the trade unions": "to transform them into revolutionary organizations which fight for the complete emancipation of the working class." In comparison with its immaculate revolutionary ideal of trade unionism, it is no wonder that all trade union leaders are denounced prematurely (from the standpoint of the class) by the OL.
Not surprisingly in shops where a union organizing drive is taking place, both the OL and RCP objectively take an anti-union, stance. Haunted by their image of the ideal "Workers' Union", OL cadre feel compelled to denounce the "bourgeois"" trade

[^0]union before the shop is even organized and many times before the drive is begun. Equally lacking in their respect for the masses of the class and for the "struggle for the reform" of organizing a trade union, the RCP quickly tries to recruit workers into other activities plotted out by the RCP leadership and away from the organizing drive and at its expense.
Since the vast majority of the workers and especially of the advanced workers are forced by their conditions of life to take a generally materialist approach, they are alienated from Marx-ism-Leninism and party-building (as well as from the labor movement in general) by the disruptive and divisive material role played by OL and RCP infantile "leftists" in the concrete strug gle against capital.

From this incorrect conclusion also comes the consistently right opportunist errors of the CLP in shop work, in unemployment work, in elections, etc. With the same narrow Party aim of recruitment as the OL and RCP, the CLP's "game plan" is to go into the mass struggle and "tail" whatever the active forces there are pushing. The CLP line in the mass struggle is "Build the Party". The expression of this line in practice is "whatever you're doing is fine with us. Now why don't you join our Party and we'll bring on a whole organization to help you." The CLP is known for its outrageously open liberalism in "sucking in" new members. If they are trying to recruit you, the CLP cadres will refuse to criticize your mass work, even if you ask them! If you're for Black Liberation in the South, they are. If the main contradiction in the world is the oppressed nations against imperialism, that's all right too. If the only contradiction is between labor and capital, they have that in their stock, too. They have both Marxism and liberalism in their stock, and, as Comrade Mao says, they find a use for each.

The CLP more and more exhibits the characteristic feature of the revisionist CPUSA in its mass work-vulgar tailism. In fact, the CLP ran candidates for political office in the November election without first having struggled to any significant degree anywhere for revolutionary leadership of the mass and class struggle against capital. And in states where their candi dates were not running for office the CLP backed the CPUSA and its openly social-pacifist program of US-Soviet detente at the expense of the oppressed peoples.

A top leader of the CLP once insisted to us that in order for "class struggle" to be taking place, it was necessary that conscious political representatives of the classes be participating directly. We referred him to the section on "class struggle" which appears in Lenin's The Teachings of Karl Marx. Here Lenin quotes from the very opening lines of Chapter I of the first developed document of scientific socialism, The Com-
munist Manifesto, as follows, "The history of all human society, past and present, has been the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian,baron and serf, guildburgess and journeyman-in a word, oppressor and oppressedstood in sharp opposition to each other. They carried on per-petual warfare, sometimes masked, sometimes open and acknowledged; a warfare that invariably ended either in a revolutionary change in the whole structure of society or else in the common ruin of the contending classes." (page 17, our emphasis)

This leader of the CLP, reflecting not only the view of that organization but of the rest of the "new communist movement" as well, insisted that the spontaneous movement of the masses and the class is of no significance without the presence of politically conscious representitives in the form of leaders and party!

How anti-materialist to disregard and disdain the actual ongoing struggle of the class and the masses! How undialectical to divorce the products of objective historical development from their subjective reflection in the form of ideas and organization! How contrary to Marxist teachings! As Comrade Stalin pointed out, "The strength and vitality of MarxismLeninism lie in the fact that it does base its practical activity on the needs of the development of the material life of society and never divorces itself from the real life of society." As Comrade Stalin further points out, " . . . in order not to err in policy, in order not to find itself in the position of idle dreamers, the party of the proletariat must not base its activities on abstract 'principles of human reason,' but on the concrete conditions of the material life of society, as the determining force of social development; not on the good wishes of 'great men,' but on the real needs of development of the material life of society." (pages 21,22, Dialectical and Historical Materialism)

Incorrect Conclusion No. 5: The role of those who possess the ideas, (and especially the petty bourgeois intelligentsia) is all-important, or the only role of consequence, or at least they are the only force worth analysing, struggling for and struggling against.

Hence, the "new communist movement", (rife with petty bourgeois individualism) places all responsibility, good or bad, onto the shoulders of "outstanding leaders", e.g. Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Foster, Nelson Peery, Avakian, Klonsky Jerry Tung, etc. This relieves or more precisely deprives the rank and file communists and the non-party masses of their own role, i.e., their own creative initiative and responsibility in the historical process.

The OL by re-publishing the great Marxist-Leninist document Negro Liberation by Harry Haywood, and especially the CLP with its re-publication of many classic Marxist-Leninist writings of the Comintern period, have done a fine thing. This is certainly a positive by-product of their emphasis on ideas and leading individuals.
However, armed with their idealist conception of history, the "new communist movement" separates the party and its leaders on the one hand from the class and the masses on the other.

Let us look, for example, at the treatment given by the "new communist movement" to the key question of what caused the degeneration of the old CPUSA. They analyze the degeneration of the old CPUSA in isolation from the condition of the class and the masses in that period. They persist in seeing the process of the degeneration of the CPUSA having been almost entirely (or solely) due to the incorrect ideas that emerged in the CPUSA and/or especially the influence of revisionist ideas from the Soviet Union within the CPUSA.

Few of these groups even mention the tremendous expansion of US imperialism throughout Asia and Africa in the post WWII period when it replaced the weakened imperialist powers: of Britain in Malaysia and India, Japan in Indochina, the Philippines, Burma, etc., Belgium in the Congo, Netherlands in Indonesia, France in Indochina, etc. Nor do they mention US imperialism's increased domination and rise to a position of hegemony in the imperialist camp through the Marshall plan and the NATO military occupation of Europe. Few mention that a condition for this expansion was a "stable rear area" in the USA, and that the condition for such a stable rear area was class collaboration from the leadership of the trade union movement, and further that a condition for the emergence of the class collaborationist leadership in the US labor movement was a class collaborationist policy in the CPUSA which left the trade union movement vulnerable to imperialist penetration.

But nowhere in the "new communist movement" is the question tion asked and answered why rank and file workers as well as trade union leaders, why rank and file communists as well as the communist leaders came to collaborate with US imperialism in its bloody expansion drive in the aftermath of WWII The answer to this does lie in part, with the rise of modern revisionism, in its Browderite manifestation in the leadership of the CPUSA, in Tito's "independent" path to socialism in Yugoslavia, and culminating after Stalin's death in the Khruschevite revisionist emergence in the leadership of the CPSU(B). Yet as dialectical materialists we must ask: What were the material reasons, what were the mass
motives for the degeneration of the militant labor movement in the USA centered in the CIO during the 1930's and 1940's and for the degeneration of the CPUSA?

The fundamental materialist answer is the answer offered by Lenin in his authoritative work, Imperialism and the Split in Socialism (1916). Lenin opens this important article with the following:
> "Is there any connection between imperialism and that monstrous and disgusting victory which opportunism (in the form of social-chauvinism) has gained over the labour movement in Europe.

This is the fundamental question of modern socialism." (p. 748, Vol. XI Selected Works)
And Lenin answers this question decisively in the affirmative. Lenin points out,
"...the opportunists (social-chauvinists) are working hand in hand with the imperialist bourgeoisie precisely towards creating an imperialist Europe on the backs of Asia and Africa, and ... . objectively the opportunists are a section of the petty bourgeoisie and of certain strata of the working class who have been bribed out of imperialist super-profits and converted into watchdogs of capitalism and corrupters of the labour movement." (page 752, ibid., Lenin's emphasis)

Lenin goes on to say,
"On the one hand, there is a tendency of the bourgeoisie and the opportunists to convert a handful of very rich and privileged nations into 'eternal' parasites on the body of the rest of mankind, to 'rest on the laurels' of the exploitation of Negroes, Hindus, etc., keeping them in subjection with the aid of the excellent technique of extermination provided by modern militarism. On the other hand, there is the tendency of the masses, who are more oppressed than ever and who bear the whole brunt of imperialist wars, to cast off this yoke and to overthrow the bourgeoisie. It is in the struggle between these two tendencies that the history of the labor movement will inevitably develop from now on." (page 759, ibid., Lenin's emphasis)

Lenin answers the question of how opportunism gained victory over the labor movement in all of Europe during the World War I period. In applying this analysis to the USA today in the post-World War II period (at least until 1971 or so), we discover that the nature of imperialism and especially its ability to bribe petty bourgeois strata and a section of the proletariat itself assumed an even more pronounced character due to the tremendous expansion of US imperialism which gave it a growing ability to bribe and influence a growing section of the working class and to offer petty bourgeois jobs to a growing number of people. A huge parasitic petty bourgeoisie grew up rapidly in this period
including an army of salesmen for a consumer oriented society, insurance clerks, salesmen and managers, bank employees, and an incredibly large state apparatus of federal, state, county and city government employees, all living off the US working class and especially off of the super-exploitation and misery of the peoples of the oppressed nations and dependent countries of the developing US world empire.

The petty bourgeoisie of the main imperialist country (the US North) became the most significant mass force among the majority white people of the US (North) oppressor nation. The white workers of the US (North) more and more developed petty bourgeois ideas and ways. They became largely split off from the rest of the international proletariat and more and more sided with "their own" imperialist bourgeoisie. The CPUSA based in this class and nation with its members subject to the same mass pressures had less and less urgent material needs for fighting, and more of a reason to tone down or give up the revolutionary class struggle.

Of course the repressive power of the state apparatus in the form of the Taft-Hartley Act against the militant labor movement and of the Truman and McCarthyite anti-communist hysteria was also necessary to convince the once formidable CPUSA to renounce its revolutionary aims and activities. And the combination of the growing imperialist "carrot" with the decisive use of the McCarthyite "stick", i.e., the blacklist and the witch-hunt proved to be too much for the CPUSA.

The "new communist movement" has taken one positive step beyond the position put forth, for example, by the Progressive Labor Party in its "boom" period in the late 1960's. The "new communist movement" recognizes that the old CPUSA had a strong, positive aspect to its history into the 1950's and that the positive as well as the negative in the experience of the CPUSA needs to be taken into account.

Nevertheless, the fact that the "new communist movement" omits all mention of the post-World War II expansion of US imperialism and the consequent material factors involved in the degeneration of the old CPUSA deprives the movement of the ability to understand the material basis upon which a new genuine Marxist-Leninist Party can be generated in the concrete conditions of today.

These groups for the most part end up putting the responsibility for the degeneration of the CPUSA on the shoulders of a few leaders, and some pick out one "individual", Earl Browder or even William Z. Foster, as being almost solely responsible for the development of revisionism in the CPUSA! (This is true of the Communist Labor Party in particular.)

It shouldn't surprise us because this conclusion flow logically from the idealist conception of history. For if we separate the
party which is the leader of the class and the masses, from the non-party masses in assessing the forces at work in the degeneration of the CPUSA, then what is to keep us from separating the party leaders from the party rank-and-file (masses) on this question? If ideas are the motive force in the degeneration of the CPUSA, then the ideas of the party leaders, of the individual Foster, etc., are decisive. This discussion of the way the "new communist movement" understands and explains the degeneration of the old CPUSA provides the key to their "understanding" of how to generate a new CPUSA today.

This anti-Marxist proposition (that the role of those who possess the ideas is all important) when applied to the party-building task goes something like this-

Party-building is a subjective process in which a bunch of people (preferably petty bourgeois intellectuals) come together on the basis of their agreement in words with the ideas of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao Tse-tung (or the "masters" as the CLP cadre call them). The leader (Nelson Peery in the CLP's case) is the "grand master" interpreter of the "masters" ideas. Therefore within a short period of time all vestiges of democratic centralism disappear and are replaced by the "grand master" (Nelson Peery here) becoming the "master" of the party, in spite of the fact that such organizational questions have been so religiously studied by the CLP members. Hence, no other party members have any real responsibility for their actions and for the conduct of the CLP (or other organizations). If they are "successful"(i.e., in recruiting members) then the "master" is a genius. If or rather when they degenerate, it is the "master's" fault! No one else needs to learn from the experience! Wrong revisionist ideas of the "master" (Nelson Peery, etc.) were responsible, period! Such is the CLP approach to the demise of the old CPUSA and of the old POC, the precursor of the CL and the CLP. Foster and Roman, respectively, were the one individual in each case responsible for succumbing to revisionist ideas, for failing to struggle against them and for pushing revisionist ideas, period.

Right now Nelson Peery is the "grand master", the owner of the CLP; it is his organization, etc. Tomorrow he will be the culprit, fully responsible for the failure of the CLP.

Is the approach of the RCP and OL cadre to the demise of the old CPUSA substantially different? Can the approach of the RCP cadre to "grand master" Avakian or the OL's approach to "grand master" Klonsky be significantly different? We think not.

Armed with the idealist conception of history, the organizations in the "new communist movement" view the task of building a new Marxist-Leninist Party essentially as a totally subjective process, as the transformation of their wishful thinking,
especially the "good wishes" of the "great individuals", into a new beautiful reality. Little if any mention is made of so important a real force as the main enemy, international capital. Nor with all the talk about revisionism is this force ever exposed on the basis of its betrayal of the oppressed and exploited peoples in the face of the imperialist enemy. Most important of all, of course, is the fact that the necessary active role of the proletariat and the toiling masses in the "creation" of a new genuine MarxistLeninist Party is totally omitted from the calculations of the "new communist movement."!!

After examining this erroneous anti-Marxist conception, and especially its implications for party-building, it should now be clear to the honest working class reader what a tremendous obstacle the "new communist movement" is to the building of a genuine Marxist-Leninist Party, capable of attracting the best and most devoted elements of the working class to its banner and capable of boldly leading the working class to victorious proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

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With their overemphasis on the "great ideas of great individuals", with their idealist conception of history, it is not surprising that the "new communist movement" would be able to discover some selections in the writings of the great leaders of the world proletarian revolutionary movement which, if taken out of historical context and divorced from contemporary material reality, would appear on the surface to support their idealist conception of party-building, etc. Thus, Lenin's What Is To Be Done? is currently the "bible" of the "new communist movement."


[^0]:    *The so-called Revolutionary Wing's bankruptcy on this question is the most obvious of all the forces in the "new communist movement" Most forces in the "wing" resist any desire to "soil" their hands in the mass movement. For example the Revolutionary Workers League (Marx-ist-Leninist) explicitly rejects all tasks except direct party-building tasks!!

