Building the Revolutionary Worker is more than just "paper work." It has proven to be a very sharp part of the struggle. Since this newspaper is a weapon for revolution, it comes as no surprise that it usually finds itself in the middle of the struggle, first and foremost. And its influence among the people grows wider, not only does the enthusiasm with which it is received grow, so does the controversy which surrounds it. This is always true whenever the enemy is challenged and whenever new ideas meet old ones head on.

What follows is the story of building the Revolutionary Worker as a force among the people in a Spanish-speaking neighborhood in a major city—the story of the minds it has opened to revolution, the forces it has mobilized, and the organization it has provoked.

"In big cities and small towns this newspaper strengthens the people who want to step out a little in the lead, so that they can see they aren't alone in their thinking, that there are other people who have the same ideas, who are also struggling to liberate themselves from oppression, like in Houston, Texas, in New York and in Washington D.C. Here in this city it gives us more confidence in our fighting ability, and gives us more power. Over time it is helping the Party here to be stronger so as to be able to rise up."

These are the words of a Chicano worker who himself only three months ago believed he was alone. He believed that his ideas about this system were strange, ideas which no one else shared. He didn't know how many other people felt the same way and that some were already beginning to struggle against the system. He didn't know that his class already has its own political party, the RCP, to lead the struggle for revolution and he didn't know that the Party has a national weekly newspaper, the Revolutionary Worker, to play the major role in preparing for the time when the people can and will rise up in revolution.

And the Revolutionary Communist party, its members and supporters in this town did not know him either. They did not know he existed and did not know that a significant community of Chicanos and Latinos existed in their area. Today this has changed, and much of that community is now cracking with struggle over the Revolutionary Worker. And this worker became one of a number of people to come out and tell the people to take it into their own hands so that together with millions they can "literally themselves from the oppression of this system of capitalism."

In the interview with the Revolutionary Worker recently, a group of these workers spoke about how they saw the Revolutionary Worker—why they first came to take it up. "In my opinion this newspaper is the only means we have at this point to bring these ideas to the people, like how we are going to make this revolution."

Today this newspaper in the weapon that we have because we are preparing ourselves mentally, with understanding, and every day is a day to begin doing more. And this is our principal weapon, the newspaper."

Another man said, "This newspaper can go into any house, it can reach any person wherever they are. It can spread to millions of people. We're at a point in the world where crisis is deepening, the crisis of hunger and the crisis of war. People are already war, but more war is coming. The capitalists have to tell us something about all this on their television. They talk and they talk but in reality they tell us nothing. Like in Iran, they told us only that the Shah was gone, but never what had really happened. Why did the people rise up in a revolutionary war, why was the Shah forced to leave? This newspaper brings us the news—but the news according to a different line. Why did it happen? What is the system of exploitation? How are people struggling against this? Like with Vietnam, I only knew that there had been a war in Vietnam, but why did the United States go to war with Vietnam, why did the war last so long, how could a country like Vietnam win against the United States? The U.S. government said, "This is our property and we will keep it." From this paper I learn that the Vietnamese people showed the U.S. they would rather fight and die than live like slaves."

Until this recent period no one in the local Party or close to the local Party had the ability to translate articles into Spanish or write leaflets in Spanish.

Before the national weekly Revolutionary Worker first came out on May 1st, Party members and supporters started to circulate a monthly local paper, which of course had no Spanish section. When the monthly Revolutionary Worker appeared, the Party and its supporters began to get down on broadening and systematizing its use, one multi-national community in particular was singled out for some concentrated work.

Making Contact

One Sunday afternoon 2 or 3 weeks after the first issue we had a large group of people went out in the neighborhood with it. Taking turns on bullhorns, knocking on every door, they went down every street, alley, and into apartment complexes and buildings. Going down one street they ran into a couple of Chicanos. This is the way that it is. I say. This is the way that it is. I say. This is the way that it is. I say. This is the way that it is. I say.

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So they went and still more papers and money changed hands while the memories proved for forgotten Spanish. But the people didn't need prompting. They had their own anger which had burned below the surface for years. They had lived filled to the brim with degradation and oppression. The revolutionaries not only got a lesson in Spanish—they got a lesson in the outrage that millions suffer with which is ready to overflow at any moment given the opportunity.

Many came forward to discuss and struggle around the question of communists coming into the community with such a paper. Among them several told the Revolutionary Worker, "I know another apartment building where only Chicanos live." "Don't you know the neighborhood on the northside of town. It is full of Latinos and Chicanos." "What about the restaurants in that part of town. Hundreds of people work in there—no one speaks only Spanish. Take the paper there," "I did a work in a factory where they were thirty Latinos. Can you send the paper there?"

As the Revolutionary Worker penetrated into the heart of some of these areas, people spoke instantly, then with more force and with more confidence about their conditions. "In Mexico they tell us the United States is heaven itself," one young worker told us, "and then you come and you find out how you will live. There is no work. Prices are high and everything's getting worse. It's heaven—it is more of the same—capitalism."

Another young worker said he had won all his co-workers to the point where they went to the Vietnamese support groups in other cities and said "Let's believe in the Vietnamese struggle. It is heaven there for us."

This community had swelled from a few thousand to many tens of thousands in less than ten years. They were ready for "legal" right to be here, in this "land of opportunity," where they were living in some cases, 8 or in more small apartment without furniture or any other instruction.

Their jobs? They told of minimum wage jobs working 60 to 70 hours a week or in sweat shops where the owners didn't care what language you spoke as long as you're willing to slave for pennies. Unemployment? Very high, but you'll never find it in the paper. According to government statistics these people don't even exist. Cast out on the back streets of the city, no one knows they are there and no one cares—at least that is the way many felt until recently.

As soon as people from the Revolutionary Worker went back out and began to talk with them the people became clear that there existed here a great reservoir of feeling about the system and the way it forces the masses to live. It also became clear that to tap this reservoir was as easy as slipping a system, passing here or there to sell these people the idea that they must be cut out and turned into revolutionary practice—into something more organized and lasting.

Relying on People

The people from the Revolutionary Worker who took up this task didn't much understand the theorists but they were determined to "learn warfare through war." They went back out again and this time they took paper first in English and then in Spanish and getting with each other to discuss this paper and then they went back out to the people. Because they couldn't speak the language of the people, they themselves, they were forced to look for and rely on people coming forward to tell them a more advanced understanding of revolutionary ideas and the need for revolutionary action, to bring them into our system, to unite with them to keep going out more and more broadly. And they found people.

As one of these workers said, "Many people attended our meetings and were really impressed by the capitalists and that we are oppressed. They know life is very hard. Even the people who pretend to try to advance even just to live. Many are already conscious of the fact that it is that they are oppressed.

Many say, 'This is the way that it is.' I say. 'This is the way that it is.' I say. 'This is the way that it is.' I say. 'This is the way that it is.' I say.

Many are going to do this because in reality each knows that they live at the mercy of the system, to unite with them to keep going out more and more broadly. And they found people.

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always difficult at the start. In my opinion, this revolutionary war we’re fighting is very young in the world. It is natural to be afraid of it. This is natural. But people who already want to fight this war, because they hate war and they are afraid of it, can learn. With this newspaper we can bring them information to learn from: What is it like now? What is the source of all your problems? What is happening? What is the strongest country in the world?”

And it began to happen. The communists looked for different ways to tap into the networks bringing forward new fighters. Groups began to meet and discuss the questions the newspaper raised. People from the community began helping to write leaflets in Spanish. A group from the community came to a conference about the paper which was held only six weeks after the first El Obrero Revolucionario was sold. It was held bilingually. The discussion broke out in a parking lot discussing their questions and on the walls of apartment buildings. One older man organized a show-down from his home and brought out fifteen friends.

Deeper Questions

Deeper questions arose that demanded an answer. One day, for instance, a man showed a communist sold copies of the Party’s pamphlet, “Cuba: The Revolutionary Offensive” which sparked a heated struggle among the people about how far from the Cuban revolution. For example, one worker thought Cuba was great, a revolution to be proud of, but there was the Soviet Union, aided freedom struggles in Latin America and around the world. But he also bought a Cuba pamphlet, which puts out a very different view. What is the struggle about? How can we talk with him about the pamphlet and what he thought about Cuba and the Soviet Union? This work, I didn’t really know anything about Cuba and the Soviet Union except that there were a lot of people here who had been for revolutions against this system and that the Soviet Union is capitalist when I read that pamphlet and that it isn’t a question of the revolution of one led by the working class. One thing I’ve learned from working with you all is that you can’t be afraid of these questions. You have read Marxim. All my life I’ve had a marvelous fascination about this system and I’ve always known that I was oppressed and that the people and the workers needed it. I read it. I don’t think I have thought “Revolution is the answer.” But I have read it. I have read about it. I know it and I didn’t know how to find out. I tried to read books, I read a lot of books and I know a lot about it but I don’t know how to talk to people about it because I thought there might be some answers there. I read about Buddhism and I read about the Mahatma Ghandhi but I didn’t know about those ideas. Marxim is the same thing. Now I know what I have to do about it. I have to read and study Marxim.

Every time a communist came into that parking lot there were people who would show up in their houses and into the streets like iron to a magnet. One day a large group of people were out on the street in a lot about religion, about why communists want to fight, about the need for people to have their own paper and had to come and sell the paper. But when they came back next time they were told don’t do that. It was against the idea of that parking lot discussing their questions and lots of politics for several hours more.

Bringing Trouble

But of course it wasn’t all smiles and agreement. People had sharp questions on the whole discussion. One worker read parts of a bacteriological treatise and asked what it was all about. He then asked what we were doing and what we’re fighting for. “What can we do—there aren’t enough of us.” “This is the strongest country in the world—how can you make revolution against it.” And there were those who charged that communists and revolutionaries only bring trouble to the people, that when communists had things they police were sure to follow, creating more problems for those in this country “illegally.”

The work around the newspaper among the people went through a process of development. When they first heard about it, many people were open and curious, “Who are these people, why are they here, what do they want from us.” Many people liked the paper and a lot of copies were sold. But as the work went on, it deepened, the contradictions in the situation sharpened. People at first only looked at the newspaper as a “good thing,” something that would give them information about the country and the world and the strength of the people. And they had looked at the communists as people who “wanted to do good things for the people.” But the communists challenged them from the beginning, “If all we are doing is good, then you should be doing it, too. It isn’t enough to buy and read the paper in your own home, like what, eating and sleeping and the whole system. For this reason, here is a way to change the country. How can a handful of us carry out this task.”

So while it was necessary to struggle to advance the struggle, it was also necessary for the communists to struggle against pre-conceived notions—little boxes into which everything must neatly fit. In particular, people sometimes tended to forget that what was going on around them, what was happening about ideas...are grasped by the masses, these ideas turn into social forces which change society and changes the world.” Sometimes there was a tendency to think that we should have every place to make anything happen, and to forget the tremendous organizing job it would take while people read.

One of the workers summed it up like this, “The whole world is revolting here but the police will come around and grab someone up and put him in their car and take him away—and this gives rise to the idea that you can’t do anything with revolutionary ideas. But for me, I know that one day I will die. That may not be true for this paper itself, it says to me—it says that I have to die and that somebody has to step up if I’m it is really a stab in the back and betrayal of Marxism and revolution. This is the same question in many ways. But many are getting a clearer and clearer understanding of what the stakes are and the enemy will not have an easy task in pulling up all the roots that have been developed by the Revolutionary Workers.”

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– Plato

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