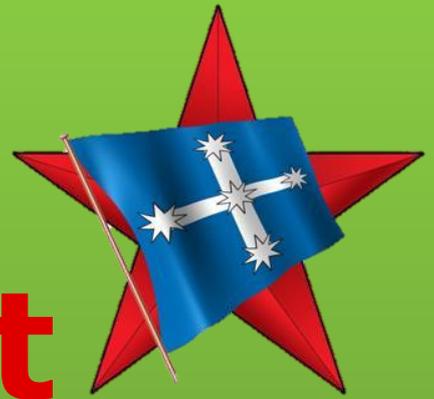


Australian Communist



JOURNAL OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA (MARXIST-LENINIST)
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150 Years On – Three Lessons
from the Paris Commune for
Revolution Today

Re-reading Lenin's Lecture
on The State

On Mass Work – an Interview
with Jose Maria Sison

and more...





“Working men’s Paris, with its Commune, will be forever celebrated as the glorious harbinger of a new society.”

– Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France (May 1871)*

This year marks 150 years since the revolutionary Paris Commune of 1871. For a brief period between March 18 and May 28, 1871, the working class of Paris took destiny into their own hands. They proved for the first time in history that the working class is capable of overthrowing the class rule of the bourgeoisie. They showed how it was possible to destroy the bourgeois state machinery and replace it with a new kind of state – a state of the working class. No longer was the state to be an instrument in the hands of a tiny minority class of exploiters used to rule over and suppress the vast masses, but a proletarian class dictatorship of the majority exercised over the exploiters, and a robust and participatory democracy for the working people.

The Paris Commune was the first historical example of what Marx and Engels called ‘the dictatorship of the proletariat’. Had its life not been bloodily snuffed out by the united armies of the French and Prussian ruling classes, who knows how far it could have advanced in building socialism. Nevertheless, the lessons its short life imparted to the international working class and proletarian revolutionaries everywhere were invaluable.

In the 150 years since the Paris Commune, the international revolutionary proletariat has gained infinitely more experience and understanding about the arduous struggle to build socialism. Today, we stand in the wake of the devastating defeats of the ground breaking socialist revolutions in both Russia and China. Yet, we should not feel hopeless. “Where would we be today *without* those “defeats,” from which we draw historical experience, understanding, power and idealism? Today, as we advance into the final battle of the proletarian class war, we stand on the foundation of those very defeats; and we cannot do without *any* of them, because each one contributes to our strength and understanding” wrote Rosa Luxemburg on the crushing of the German revolution of 1919, days before she was murdered at the hands of counter revolutionaries.

Among the most important of those lessons learned from the history of our struggles is that it is the people, and the people alone, who make history. Without the masses, we cannot make revolution or build socialism. Today capitalism is hurtling into the depths of ever greater crisis. Its contradictions intensifying and becoming ever clearer to greater and greater numbers of people. Crisis engenders resistance. Once again, the masses are searching for an alternative to the endless drudgery, oppression, and irrationality of capitalism. But our class need not repeat 150 years of history to learn its lessons again.

We publish this edition of *Australian Communist*, as always, with the intention of it being a modest step in our efforts to assist in spreading some of the knowledge gained from the experience of the historical struggles of our class, and to help strengthen it for the struggles still to be waged in the fight for a brighter socialist future.

Editors, April 2021



Australian Communist | Autumn 2021

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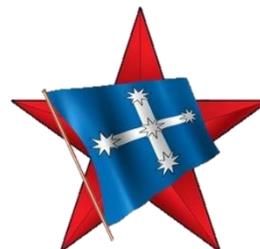
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150 Years On – Three Lessons of the Paris Commune for Revolution Today

by Danny O.

“On the dawn of the 18th of March, Paris arose to the thunderburst of “Vive la Commune!” What is the Commune, that sphinx so tantalising to the bourgeois mind?”

So said Karl Marx on May 30, 1871 in an address to the General Council of the International Workingmen’s Association (the First International), just two days after the Paris Commune had been bloodily suppressed. Marx’s address would soon become his famous published work on the historical significance of the Commune, *The Civil War in France*.

Friedreich Engels would give a most succinct answer to what the Commune was. The final words of his introduction to a new edition of *The Civil War in France* in 1891, twenty years later, were, “Look at the Paris Commune. That was the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.”

The Paris Commune of 1871 was the first time in world history that the proletariat successfully overthrew the reactionary state power of the bourgeoisie, seized political power for itself and attempted to establish its own rule as a class to govern itself democratically. “The proletarians of Paris...have understood that it is their imperious duty and their absolute right to render themselves masters of their own destinies, by seizing upon the governmental power”, stated a March 18 manifesto of the Parisian workers. It was the first proletarian revolution of world historical significance. It is precisely in that respect that the class conscious workers of the world will forever remember and celebrate the anniversary of the Paris Commune.

Despite the revolution’s short life lasting just 72 days, surviving under the most perilous and difficult of circumstances, its impact was enormous and its inspiration long lasting. The first experience of the proletariat in power

imparted a plethora of valuable lessons to the international working class movement, both in its successes and failures. Importantly, it provided Marx and Engels the concrete historical example necessary to bring further theoretical clarity to the science of proletarian revolution and scientific socialism.

The 150th anniversary of the Paris Commune offers us an opportune moment to examine the fascinating history and heroic struggle of the Commune and its Communards in intimate detail and celebrate its importance. Many fantastic articles, lectures, and discussions have been prepared around the world to do just that.

This article will not try to replicate them. Instead, it will highlight three vital lessons from the example of the Paris Commune that all revolutionaries aiming at the realisation of the dictatorship of the proletariat today must understand. These lessons have been confirmed by every revolutionary proletarian movement in the 20th century to have successfully taken power and held it for any prolonged period of time. They are basic principles of Marxism-Leninism. However, they are not the *only* principles or necessities for waging successful socialist revolution. There are many others. It would be incredibly erroneous and dangerous to reduce Marxism-Leninism to only the following three points. Likewise, it would be just as erroneous and dangerous to neglect their centrality and importance.

1. The Class State

One of the most important lessons for revolution that Marx and Engels took away from the Paris Commune was in regards to the state. In analysing this revolutionary experience in *The Civil War in France*, Marx remarked that “the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own



purposes.” That is, the state as it exists under the rule of the bourgeoisie has its own historical development which emerges alongside the historical development of the bourgeoisie as a ruling class, and is thus completely imbued with the class character of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeois state exists to serve the interests of the bourgeoisie as the ruling class. The proletariat, therefore, in overthrowing the bourgeoisie and establishing itself as the ruling class cannot use the bourgeois state to enforce its class dictatorship. The bourgeois state must be smashed and replaced with a state organised to serve the interests of, and imbued with the character of, the proletariat.

Prior to the Paris Commune, Marx and Engels, had only spoken in the vaguest terms about how the future dictatorship of the proletariat was to be organised. Never ones to fall in to idealism and utopianism, they relied on the historical mass movement to provide the answers. The historical experience of the Paris Commune provided them with a glimpse of what the answers might be.

“The first decree of the Commune, therefore, was the suppression of the standing army, and the substitution for it of the armed people,” Marx points out. That is, the proletariat moved quickly to smash the bourgeois military machine that would seek to suppress and dislodge it from its newly acquired class rule. They replaced it, not with a body separate and standing outside the working people, but with the people themselves armed and organised to defend their own class interests.

Further, the Commune smashed and replaced the bureaucracy of the bourgeoisie’s political rule. It did away with the privileges of the government representatives. The Commune was to be made up of representatives of the working class elected by universal suffrage (though still limited only to men), paid only the wages of an ordinary worker, and were subject to recall at any time. Likewise, all functionaries of the state and

public service were to be paid no more than worker’s wages: “The vested interests and the representation allowances of the high dignitaries of state disappeared along with the high dignitaries themselves.”

These are just a few examples of the way that the Parisian working class demonstrated the practical course for the smashing of the bureaucratic-military state machinery of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. In short, it in every way replaced the narrow and limited scope of bourgeois democracy with a truly participatory and inclusive proletarian democracy. This quantitative shift thus brought about a qualitative shift in the nature of the state and its institutions. From one serving the interests of a minority exploiting class, to one serving the interests of a vast majority established as the ruling class.

So fundamental were the lessons of the Paris Commune in regards to the state and the dictatorship of the proletariat for Marx and Engels, they felt compelled in 1872 to include in a new preface to *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), the shortcomings of the work in light of the historical proletarian movement, noting

“One thing was especially proved by the Commune, viz., that ‘*the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes*’...”.

The Marxist position on this fundamental question of revolution would find its most ardent defender against all distortions in Lenin, most notably in his work *The State and Revolution*, essential reading for all who seek to come to grips with the class nature of the state and what it means for our struggles for proletarian revolution. To not have a correct understanding of the class character of the state will lead to fundamental mistakes in the struggle for socialism. The nature of the state means there can be no peaceful road to socialism. Nor can the working class simply use the bourgeois

“...the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes.”



parliament, courts and laws, and other institutions of capitalist class rule to overthrow their class enemies and achieve socialism. While the revolutionary party and working class can and should make use of what freedoms it has and exploit what ever contradictions it can in the capitalist state to further its revolutionary aims, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and thus socialism, cannot be achieved without comprehensively first smashing the existing bourgeois state and the proletariat replacing it with its own.

2. The Revolution Armed

How then is the proletariat to overthrow the political power of the bourgeoisie? The Paris Commune provided an answer, which has since been confirmed by all revolutionary struggles of the proletariat in the 150 years since. It is impossible for the proletariat to seize political power in its hands without armed force.

A general revolutionary situation existed in Paris at the start of 1871 as a result of the defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian War in 1870. Prussian troops had Paris under siege for many months and life inside the city was increasingly hard and desperate for the working class and other working people. In Paris, a militia force called the National Guard, made up overwhelmingly of the working class existed for the defence of Paris against the Prussian

invasion. As jobs stopped working due to the state of siege, tens of thousands of workers joined the armed militia. Thus, the working class of Paris was armed and organised.

When the French central government capitulated in surrender to Prussia, it had to disarm the Parisian workers as part of the surrender agreement. The workers of Paris, on the other hand, were disgusted at the betrayal of the French bourgeoisie. When the government attempted to disarm the workers on March 18, they resisted. This triggered the revolt of the Paris workers, the fleeing of the central government from Paris to Versailles, and led to the establishment of the Paris Commune.

Thus, Mao Zedong's maxim formulated during the experience of the Chinese revolution many years later is confirmed in the experience of the Paris Commune as well: "Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun." Could the workers of Paris have taken power if they were not armed? Definitely, no. Yet, was being armed the only factor in the ability to seize political power? Again, no. The existence of a general revolutionary situation due to the war was also critical.

We should not make a fetish out of arms or violence. We mustn't put the cart before the horse, so to speak. The seizure of power by the working class is a mass question. It is a task for



A revolutionary war of the masses is waged in defence of the Commune. Many women and children fought along side men on the barricades in fierce street fighting.



the revolutionary masses. Central to its success is the ideological and political preparation and organisation of the working class into a fighting force under the leadership of the Communist Party. However, the truth remains, confirmed by history in the revolutionary struggles of the people of Paris, Russia, China, Cuba, Vietnam, and many others. It is a fundamental principle of Marxism-Leninism that the political power of the bourgeoisie can only be overthrown by armed force. This is a fact that anyone who wishes to see the realisation of the dictatorship of the proletariat today must sooner or later deal with.

3. The Party

Marx did not just analyse the positive aspects of the Paris Commune, but also its failures and shortcomings. There were two big mistakes of the Commune in the eyes of Marx and Engels. The first was the failure of the Communards to seize the Bank of France. In his introduction to *The Civil War in France*, Engels wrote:

“The hardest thing to understand is certainly the holy awe with which they remained standing respectfully outside the gates of the Bank of France... The bank in the hands of the Commune – this would have been worth more than ten thousand hostages. It would have meant the pressure of the whole of the French bourgeoisie on the Versailles government in favour of peace with the Commune.”

Second, was the failure of the Commune to quickly squash the central government at nearby Versailles while it was weak and defenceless. The failure to go on the offensive sealed the Commune’s fate, allowing the government to seek reinforcements and eventually overwhelm the Communards, drowning them in a week-long bloody massacre that killed around 30,000 workers.

Fundamental to these mistakes was the lack of a

revolutionary proletarian party capable of providing the strong, clear-sighted, and disciplined leadership needed to guide the revolutionary movement in its necessary tasks. Marxists were practically non-existent in the Paris Commune. The leadership was made up of predominately Blanquists, and the followers of the petty-bourgeois socialism of Proudhon. The course of events would prove only the Marxist analysis correct.

The success of revolutionary movements in the 20th century to seize political power and successfully hold it for prolonged periods of time has shown the correctness of the need for the proletariat to have a revolutionary vanguard party. The party is needed to build its ideological and organisational strength and provide leadership to the working class in order to overthrow the bourgeoisie, establish the dictatorship of the proletariat, and build socialism. Building the party is a primary task today if we wish to see the working class take political power into its own hands once more.

Harbinger of a new society

Speaking of the Commune, Marx concluded “Working men’s Paris, with its Commune, will be for ever celebrated as the glorious harbinger of a new society.” 150 years ago, the historical example of the world’s first dictatorship of the proletariat showed the boundless potential of the working class to change the world and remould society. Despite the overwhelming situation against them, the workers of Paris stepped on to the historical stage by seizing political power in their own hands, heralding the future socialist society. Their experience and sacrifices, as well as the experience of all revolutionary attempts at creating the new society in the past 150 years, offer us invaluable examples that should be studied and lessons to be learned and applied in our revolutionary struggles today.

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Re-reading Lenin's Lecture on 'The State'

by Nick G.

The State is the name given to a lecture Lenin delivered to students at the Sverdlov University on July 11, 1919.

It is a very brief introduction to the topic, responding to a plan for the lecture that came from the students themselves.

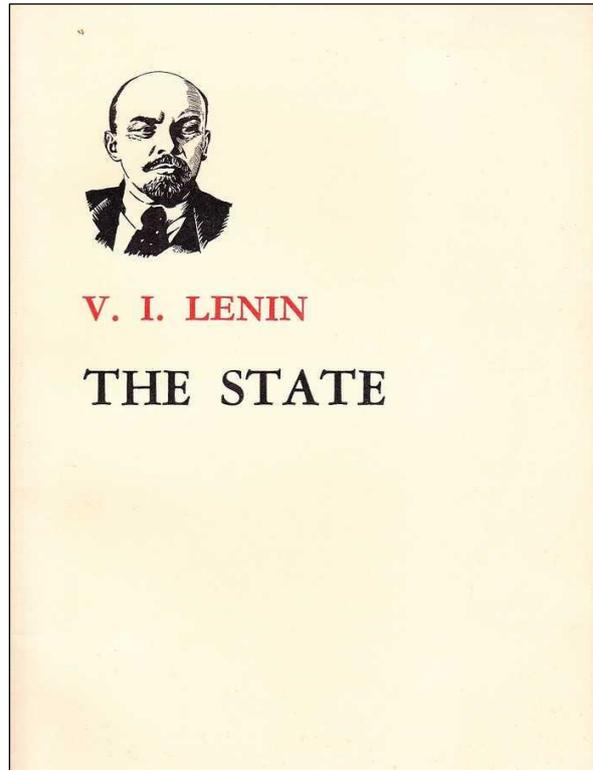
There must have been particular issues, already covered in Lenin's 1917 *The State and Revolution*, written while he was in exile, that they felt needed clarification.

Approaching study as Marxists

Lenin begins by acknowledging that the topic of the state is difficult and complicated, and like a good teacher, encourages his students with ways to persist in their study: "...what is unclear at a first reading will become clear at a second reading, or when you subsequently approach the question from a somewhat different angle."

But Lenin is not proposing reading for the sake of book learning, or for the ability to parrot what Marx and Engels, for example, have written on the topic. He encourages the students to study the content so as to learn the Marxist method of approaching problems. They should aspire to become confident and independent practitioners of Marxism. "...you should acquire the ability to approach this question independently, since you will be meeting this question on the most diverse occasions, in connection with the most trifling questions, in the most unexpected conjunctures, and in discussions and disputes with opponents."

He then repeats his warning that "you will scarcely find another question which has been so confused, deliberately and undeliberately, by representatives of bourgeois science, philosophy, jurisprudence, political economy and journalism, as the question of the state."



Study phenomena in terms of their historical development

Lenin has already told them that "The doctrine of the state serves as a justification of social privilege, a justification of the existence of exploitation, a justification of the existence of capitalism..." But to grasp this it is necessary to examine its historical development.

He recommends that the students acquaint themselves with Engels' book *On the Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, warning them that they will find parts of it difficult, parts that presume a reader "who already possesses a certain knowledge of history and economics". He says not to be discouraged – hardly anyone completely understands such a work on a first reading.

Following Engels, he states that prior to the emergence of classes, there were no states, "no



special apparatus for the systematic application of force and the subjugation of people by force.” However, once there is a division of society into classes, there emerges the need for “a special apparatus of coercion and of subjugating the will of others by force – prisons, special detachments of men, armies, etc. – then there appears the state.”

Such an apparatus of coercion is “separated out from human society”, he says. After tracing the development of the state in various epochs of class society, he again repeats that the state is a “certain apparatus...separated out from society...”

Lenin is repeating and giving emphasis to a point made by Engels, namely that the transition from the laws governing the behaviour of pre-class, clan-based societies (laws he refers to as the “gentile constitution”) to the first forms of the state result in an apparatus independent of and apart from society and beyond the control of the people it is designed to oppress. Says Engels, the gentile constitution “...changes into its opposite: from an organization of tribes for the free ordering of their own affairs it becomes an organization for the plundering and oppression of their neighbours; and correspondingly its organs change from instruments of the will of the people into independent organs for the domination and oppression of the people.”

Form and content

Lenin tells the students that “The state is a machine for maintaining the rule of one class over another”. That is, the state always has a class basis, a class content and a class function.

However, the form of the state may vary and in various epochs of production relations (slave, feudal, capitalist), the form may be republican,

monarchist, aristocratic or democratic. To these forms we may add fascist, where the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie drops all pretences towards democracy and the class rule of the bourgeoisie is exercised in the most openly brutal and violent way. Yet, it is important to note that even fascist dictatorships use deception, sophisticated lies and propaganda to support their repressive state apparatus.

The capitalist state as the champion of the liberty of all

Lenin next explains how the capitalist state, in its struggle to replace feudalism, “proclaimed liberty for the whole people as its slogan”. It denied that it was a class state and clothed itself in references to classless “freedom”, classless “liberty” and classless “democracy”. Yet, even in the “freest democratic republics...the state is a machine that enables capitalists of the given country to maintain their power over the working class and the peasantry”.

The origins of the capitalist state as the champion of the liberty of all have enabled its apologists to confuse the question of its class nature. Not only that, this deception as to its true nature provides it with a defence against the rival claims of the new Bolshevik state as it existed at the time of his lecture in 1919 which it slanders as anti-democratic and a violator of popular rule, of rule by the people themselves.

Of course, the bourgeois state as it emerged in its infancy, had to be dragged kicking and screaming in the direction of universal male suffrage, secret ballots, votes for women – all unhappily conceded elements of what became the bourgeois state in its maturity. The political parties (conservatives and liberals) developed as means for advancing the interests of different sections of the ruling class; only later did the

Lenin tells the students that “The state is a machine for maintaining the rule of one class over another”. That is, the state always has a class basis, a class content and a class function.



working class aspire to, and win the right to, parliamentary representation.

Parliamentarism and its electoral system assisted the development of the working class but gave parliamentarism and bourgeois elections “great importance in the eyes of the broad masses of the people”. This, for Lenin, was a further source of the confusion and complexity on the question of the state, and was why “a radical change seems to be so difficult”.

The State and the tasks before us

Since its inception in 1920, the Communist Party in Australia has attempted to popularise and apply a Marxist-Leninist understanding of the state. Some of the confusion and complexity on this question was evident in the Party itself and explains the susceptibility of certain of the Party’s leaders and members to the redefinition of the state advanced by Khrushchev after the 20th Congress of the CPSU in 1956. Khrushchev maintained that the socialist Soviet state was no longer a proletarian dictatorship, but a “state of the whole people”, and that capitalist states were no longer fixed as bourgeois dictatorships but were open to “peaceful transition” towards socialism. The influence of revisionism on the vital question of the state and of parliamentarism and the contradiction between that revisionism and Marxism-Leninism led to a split within the CPA and in 1964, to the formation of the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist).

Writing after the split, Ted Hill, the founding Chairperson of the CPA (M-L) stated: “Nor must it be thought that the danger of a return to revisionism has passed. It will never pass. It continually asserts itself in big things and small things”.

There are several things that we should give thought to, following a re-reading of *The State*.

In terms of mass work, Communists are surrounded by references to “democracy”, “freedom of thought and expression”, “freedom of the press”, “freedom of the individual”, “right to vote” and so on. When expressions like these

are heard in our workplaces or communities, they must be listened to and an appropriate way to continue a discussion found. Asking a question that starts from where the speaker is at is often better than offering an opinion that starts from where the Communist is at.

“Yeah, parliament is important. After all, it wasn’t given to us. People had to fight for some of our rights within it. But why do you reckon there’s such a strong belief in parliament, yet such cynicism about politicians?”

Or: “Yeah, freedom of the press is a great ideal, but can you or I go out and set up a press in opposition to Murdoch? What does freedom of the press really mean when you need his sort of money to compete with hm?”

Or: “Yeah, look, I’d probably prefer a republic to a constitutional monarchy, but either way, how much do you really think it is going to change? Or rather, what do you think wouldn’t change if we had one rather than the other?”

When people in workplaces or community organisations talk of policing or the law and justice, are there openings for raising the issue of the separation of state personnel and institutions from general society?

Prior to the Covid outbreak, a survey on who Australians trusted most saw police with higher trust ratings than teachers. A huge propaganda effort over decades has turned the very low regard most people felt for police into one of the most trusted groups in society. Then Black Lives Matter protests gave mainstream Australia some inkling that police regularly, and indeed systemically, bashed and murdered First Peoples, and ran amok in their communities. It's struggle that shifts people's perceptions. Being with people in struggle is where we must focus our main energy.

But, if we really want to know what is going on in the world around us and affect it, we also need to mix widely rather than just in a left bloc. After all, echo chambers of like-minded people is exactly how Facebook makes its billions. It manipulates



us to disempower us. So, it's useful to think how to phrase the truth to those who don't share our views. We have to show we listen to them, to take their ideas and raise them to a higher level of understanding.

“Yeah, I agree, cops have bugged a job but does that excuse the way they act sometimes? I mean, they're everyone's brother or sister, or son and daughter, or teammate or next-door neighbour. But why is police culture so closed, so cut off from the rest of us? Why do they have to have so much authority while we can't seem to question them at all?”

Or: “Yeah, there are plenty of problems with the courts and the way they operate, but why are they so remote from us? Do you feel like you've ever been asked about a law or how it's carried into effect? Do you reckon we could ever make the system more accountable to ordinary citizens like us?”

We also need to be clear about socialism and the difference it would make.

That is where we have got to be at ideologically, and where careful mass work has the aim of taking people along with us.

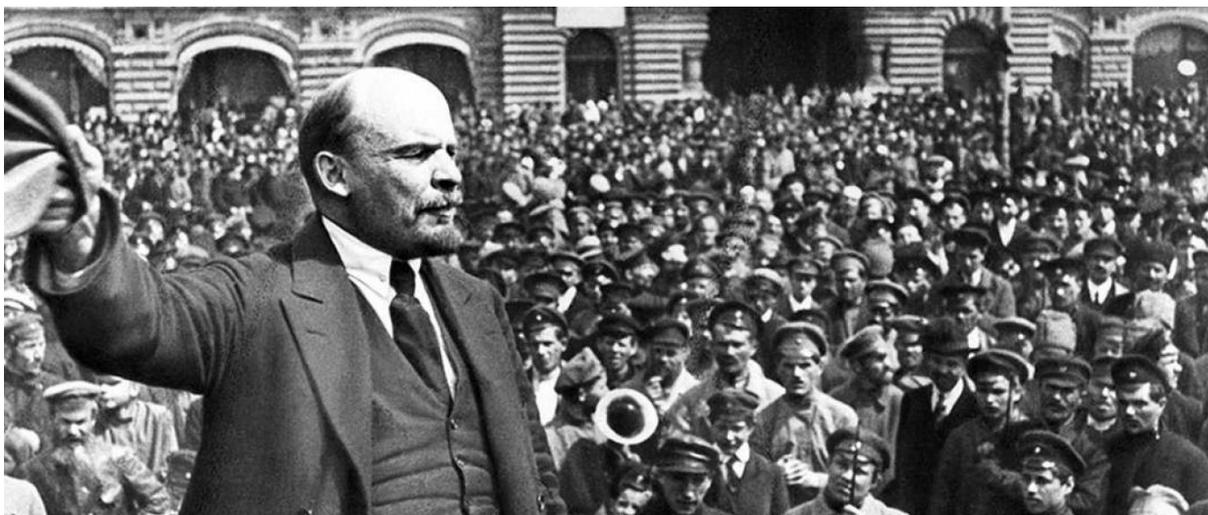
We need to be confident that a dictatorship of the proletariat, as the class content of a socialist state, is at the same time more genuinely democratic for the people. The coercive measures that enable a socialist state to defend itself must be controlled and limited to those who

would want to restore a capitalist society. The unity of opposites of dictatorship over those people and democracy for the builders of socialism must be balanced and proportionate.

Under socialism, the separation of the coercive apparatus of the proletarian state from socialist society must be restricted and accountable. Capitalism systematically excludes the rest of society from making laws, from judging people according to those laws and from coercing people under those laws. The elements of the bourgeois state (parliament, prisons courts, armies, police, secret police) are elements from which the ordinary person is effectively excluded. Socialism must aim to eliminate that exclusion and provide those building socialism in their workplaces and communities with genuine avenues for participation in the affairs of the state.

These latter issues require us to become more familiar with the operation of the state in the socialist periods of the USSR and China. Paraphrasing Lenin, that is difficult and complicated. However, we must make the effort if we are to win people to fighting for socialism and communism, for as Lenin said, “...you should acquire the ability to approach this question independently, since you will be meeting this question on the most diverse occasions, in connection with the most trifling questions, in the most unexpected conjunctures, and in discussions and disputes with opponents.”

We can do this and we must.





On Mass Work – an Interview with Jose Maria Sison

Mass work and the mass line are fundamental in the practical and ideological work of the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist). It is the principle we practice in serving the people and the method we use in our social investigation and examination of Australia's conditions, classes and class struggle.

Mass work demands respect for the masses and learning from the people. It is rooted in the material (real) world where the theory and practice of struggle can be tested and strengthened. As communists striving to serve the people, we learn from the masses who are the source of knowledge of the real world and struggle. The CPA (M-L) has an unshakeable confidence in the collective wisdom and power of the working people and relies absolutely on mass struggle and mass organisations of the people. Mass work and the mass line compel communists to listen and learn from the people, and turn these experiences and knowledge of the people into revolutionary leadership.

If communists and activists want to dedicate themselves to the immediate and revolutionary struggles of the working class and genuinely strive to lift the conditions of working people they must be with the people at all times. They must be involved in the lives and struggles of the people to understand the concrete conditions, the consciousness and thinking of the people at different times and places and be able to differentiate between the primary and secondary contradictions in class struggle. Without this knowledge born of practice and investigation communists cannot know or understand the objective conditions and will either trail behind the people or rush too far ahead, ending in isolation and irrelevance. Great damage can be done to mass movements and organisations.



Jose Maria Sison

Deep connections in the working class ground communists and activists in the real world of class struggle and all its complexities. The communist practice and ideology of mass work and mass line serve the people's revolutionary struggle for an independent and socialist Australia.

We reprint a recent interview with Jose Maria Sison, founding member of the Communist Party of the Philippines, on the practice and theory of mass work. The Q & A interview discusses revolutionary mass work specific to conditions in the Philippines. However, the communist principles of mass work in building a revolutionary movement and party are universal. Lenin and Mao wrote a great deal on mass work and developed the revolutionary practice and ideology of mass work in their countries' own conditions. They strongly urged communists to practice and develop mass work specific to conditions and characteristics of their own countries. Sison built on the experiences and lessons of the Russian and Chinese revolutions and further developed the revolutionary practice of mass work in the Philippines conditions.



First Episode in the Series of Introduction to Marxism-Leninism under the auspices of ND Online School of Anakbayan-Europa

Questions by Host Anghelo Godino

Answers by Guest Jose Maria Sison

January 10, 2021

1. What are the principal objectives of mass work?

JMS: The principal objectives of mass work are to arouse, organize and mobilize the masses on long-term and immediate issues along the general political line or political program of the people's democratic revolution defined by the revolutionary party of the proletariat in correspondence to the semicolonial and semifeudal character of current Philippine society.

The people's democratic revolution is a mass undertaking in the interest of the people. It is only through the arousal, organization and mobilization of the toiling masses of workers and peasants that the Party can realize the revolution and have a source of increasing Party cadres and members who can lead an increasing number of masses for fighting and defeating the exploitative and oppressive ruling system.

2. What is the mass line?

JMS: The mass line is the Party's policy and method of learning from the masses their conditions, needs and demands in order to arouse, organize and mobilize them so that they themselves can do whatever they can to advance the revolutionary process at every stage and phase. It is wrong to tell the masses what to do without first learning from them what needs to be done and what they are capable of doing at every given time.

It is also wrong to tail after them and expect them to decide and do by themselves what needs to be done to carry out the revolutionary struggle without the general political line or program set by the Party after investigating and analyzing the general conditions and basic character of the ruling system. The revolutionary process cannot

advance from one stage to another without both the leadership of the Party and the conscious and organized mobilization of the masses. One without the other spells failure.

3. How do we follow the revolutionary class line in mass work?

JMS: The revolutionary class line of the Party requires the class leadership of the proletariat from the stage of the people's democratic revolution to the socialist revolution. But for the stage of the people's democratic revolution, the Party can realize its leadership only by basing itself on the alliance of the working class and peasantry, winning over the middle social strata and taking advantage of the splits among the reactionary classes.

The main content of the democratic revolution is the agrarian revolution, which can be realized only with the proletariat taking the leading role and the peasantry being the main force. Otherwise agrarian revolution and the people's democratic revolution cannot be realized in the face of the combined efforts of the big compradors, landlords and bureaucrat capitalists in exploiting and oppressing the peasant masses as well as confusing them about feudal and semifeudal relations and bourgeois land reform.

4. Why is social investigation and class analysis important in mass work?

JMS: Social investigation and class analysis in mass work are not only important but decisive. By doing them, you would be able to gain a working knowledge about the locality and the situation. You would learn how to approach and relate to different kinds of people. You would know their concrete conditions, problems, needs and demands.

Social investigation and class analysis allow you to know who are your potential friends and enemies according to their class character. In social investigation meetings, you gain the factual basis for knowing those you can rely on, those you need to win over and those to whom you need to be careful of. You can begin to assess and determine which persons you can rely on for



arousing and organizing the poor and lower middle peasants.

5. What is the key link of mass work in the countryside?

JMS: The key link of mass work in the countryside is the class link between the proletariat and the peasantry. The revolutionary party of the proletariat directs its cadres and members to go to the countryside to conduct social investigation and class analysis and to form the peasant associations, other mass organizations, units of the people's army, the local party branches and the organs of political power.

However, it is the standard practice of the Party within the New People's Army to first of all organize the *barangay* [smallest administrative division in the Philippines – ed.] organizing committee to consist of the representatives of the masses (poor peasants, lower middle peasants and farm workers, the Party and people's army) in order to have soonest a local organ of political power, pending the formation of the revolutionary mass organizations. Thereafter, the *barangay* organizing committee graduates into the *barangay* revolutionary committees constituted by the elected representatives of the mass organizations and the representatives of the Party and the people's army.

Consequent to propaganda and agitation, organizing committees can be formed to prepare for the formation of the local organ of political power at the *barangay* level and the mass organizations of peasants, workers if any in the locality, women, youth and others. The initial mass base of the Party and the revolutionary movement is thus established. Various types of campaigns are undertaken to mobilize the masses to uphold, defend and promote their rights and interests.

6. How do mass activists emerge? What mass movement do we develop in the cities?

JMS: Mass activists arise as a result of the formation of the various types of mass organizations which recruit their respective mass

members. These may be called activists because they are active in promoting and realizing the principles, policies, aims and objectives of their mass organizations.

Just as there are rural-based mass organizations and movements, there are also the urban-based mass organizations and movements. Those in the rural areas are deliberately underground or clandestine in relation to the enemy. Those in the urban areas are legal and open, depending on the situation.

The mass movements that develop in the urban areas depend on what classes and sectors are there. There are the mass movements of the workers, the transport workers, the urban poor, the peddlers, the student youth, women, teachers and other professionals, government employees, human rights defenders and so on.

7. Why is mass work important in forming the Party?

JMS: Mass work is important in forming the Party of the proletariat. In the history of the working class movement in the world and in the Philippines, the trade unions appeared as the first manifestation of the working class developing from being a class in itself, arising from the need of the need of capitalism for wage slaves, to being a class for itself with an increasing drive to uphold, defend and promote its class rights and interests and eventually forming its party not only to struggle for immediate economic and political aims but also for the ultimate goal of socialism and the overthrow of the bourgeoisie.

The foundation of the old Communist Party of the Philippines of 1930 was preceded by the existence and development of the trade union movement. Likewise, the reestablishment of this party under the guidance of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism in 1968 was preceded by the development of the trade union movement as well as by the Kabataang Makabayan, a patriotic youth movement dedicated to promoting working class leadership. Mass work is therefore important and decisive in forming and further developing the Party. It is the indispensable source of Party cadres and members.



8. Why is propaganda work important to our mass work?

JMS: Propaganda is the propagation of the general line or program of people's democratic revolution and the specific policies and lines on issues that arise from social investigation and class and analysis of concrete conditions. It means carrying out the first task of mass work, which is to arouse the people, in connection with the further tasks of organizing and mobilizing them. You cannot proceed to these two latter tasks without performing the first task.

In a new area of expansion, the mass work is preceded by propaganda because of the information that spreads and reaches the people about the mass line, accomplishments and good standing of the Party and its mass organizations in upholding, defending and advancing the rights and interests of the toiling masses of the people. Thus, the Party and its mass organizations are welcome.

9. What are the means and forms of revolutionary propaganda?

JMS: In the broadest sense, revolutionary propaganda ranges in meaning from agitational speech and leaflets on specific issues to a somewhat more extended written or oral presentation of issues and further to courses of Party and mass education. Actually, propaganda begins when the Party and mass activists start to explain issues and possible courses of action to personal contacts in the localities, prior organizations and institutions for the purpose of starting mass work.

Such contacts can lead to social investigation and class analysis, the formation of organizing committees, the founding and development of the mass organizations and mobilizing the people to act and speak up on burning issues. All these forms of mass work entail propaganda. And the propaganda work becomes more substantial and effective as it is carried out by the mass organizations and by mass mobilizations in the course of information and work campaigns.

10. Why is education work important to our mass work?

JMS: Education work is important because it provides the information and ideas that motivate and inspire to engage in organized revolutionary work and struggle for the just cause of the people's democratic revolution against imperialist domination and the local reactionary classes of big compradors, landlords and bureaucrat capitalists.

Education work practically covers what propaganda covers as the propaganda of information and ideas to motivate and inspire revolutionary work and struggle. But education work has the nuance of systematic and concentrated study of certain subjects in work-related study meetings as well in formal study courses of political and theoretical education of the Party and the mass organizations.

11. What are the two most important principles we must remember in organizing the masses?

JMS: I think that the first principle is to serve the masses. You will do the work necessary to organize them because you adhere to the just cause of national and social liberation against the oppression and exploitation that they suffer. It is your duty to organize them so that they themselves can liberate themselves under the leadership of the Party.

The second principle is to learn from the masses their conditions, needs, demands and aspirations. You have your earlier experiences and education in theory and practice. But stay humble and do not think that you can dictate what the masses are supposed to do. You have to learn from them first so that you would know what is to be done and how to persuade them to act for their own benefit.

There is mutual learning between the organizer and the masses but the organizer must first learn from them and does not stop doing so even as they learn from the propaganda and education from the Party and the mass organizations. Party leadership and mass participation are necessary



for carrying out revolutionary tasks.

12. What are the preliminary steps in organizing the masses?

JMS: First of all, every mass organization must have a plan to expand itself by calling on all its existing leading organs at various levels and its general membership to help recruit more members and form new chapters and by forming organizing groups or committees. There should also be a direct call to the masses concerned to join the mass organization and to contact its nearest office.

Where there is a number of prospective members, on the basis of the report and recommendation of an organizing group or committee, the mass organization must assign one member responsible for education to explain its constitution and program of action and another member responsible for swearing in the new members, forming the chapter and ensuring the election of the chapter officers. New chapters may arise either because of wave-upon-wave or leapfrog expansion.

13. Why must we establish organizing groups and organizing committees? When do we form them?

JMS: We must establish the organizing group or committee to prepare for the formation of a chapter in order to ensure collectivity in assessing and evaluating the initial recruits in the formation of a new chapter. Decisions of a collective are better-rounded than those of an individual.

The organizing group or committee is formed because an established chapter or any of its members has contacts with persons or groups in an adjoining or nearby area who are interested in joining the mass organization and forming their own chapter. There are also persons who respond to the general calls for recruitment by the mass organizations.

14. What are mass actions and mass campaigns?

JMS: Mass actions are conducted singularly either to arouse the masses on certain issues by

explaining these to them and eliciting from them protest and demands, to make calls for recruitment or to engage in mass recruitment or to mobilize support for a certain campaign of the mass organization or any of its allied organizations in the Philippines or abroad.

The mass campaign of the mass organization is definitely a series of mass actions devoted to arousing mass support for a definite cause or demand, gathering material and moral support and mobilizing the masses inside and outside of the mass organization for the purpose.

15. What are the tasks after every mass action and mass struggle?

JMS: After every mass action and mass struggle, the tasks include assessing and evaluating it, learning lessons and taking the decisions to improve and intensify the struggle, further develop relations with other mass organizations, recruit new members from the non-members who have participated in the mass action or mass struggle, provide political education and integrate them in the mass organization.

16. What is meant by consolidation? What is meant by expansion and how are they related?

JMS: Expansion means using the quickest possible ways of arousing, organizing and mobilizing the masses inside and outside of the mass organization in order to recruit new members and form new chapters.

Consolidation means using principally education to deepen the revolutionary commitment of members, raise the level of consciousness and inspire them to attend study meetings, participate in work and become more integrated in the mass organization.

Consolidation is the educational and organizational strengthening of the foundation of the mass organization for raising the level of revolutionary consciousness and militancy of members as responsible individuals and as a collective force.



Book Review:

Like Ho Chi Minh! Like Che Guevara! The Revolutionary Left in Ethiopia, 1969-1979

Ian Scott Horst,
Foreign Languages Press, Paris, 2020

by John S.

This book tracks and analyses the growth and defeat of the Marxist-Leninist movement in Ethiopia, from the movement to overthrow the monarchy of Haile Selassie, the seizure of power by the military clique, called the Derg, the competing claims to be truly Marxist-Leninist, the intervention of the Soviet Union and its junior partner, Cuba, through to the defeat of the real Marxist-Leninist movement.

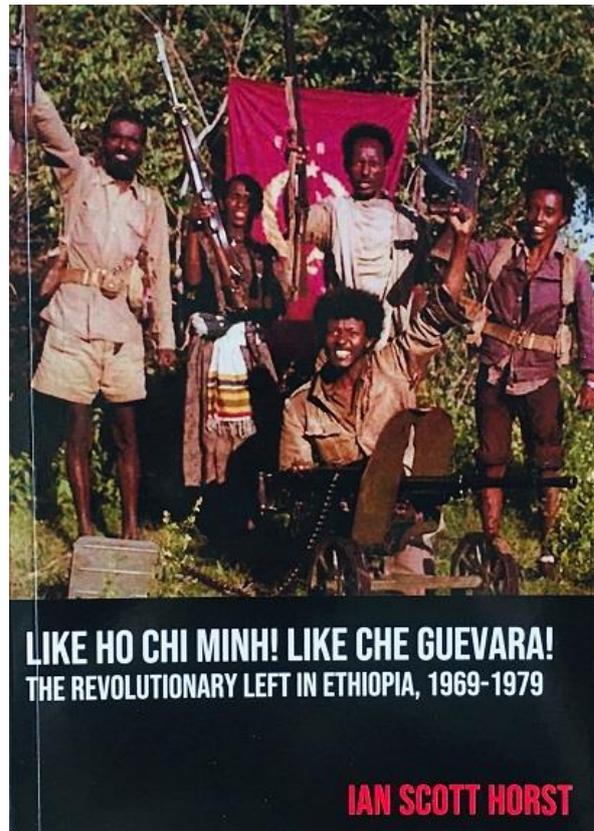
Background

Ethiopia is the home of an ancient Orthodox Christian empire. Over two thousand years ago, it waged a successful war to destroy the powerful Jewish kingdom based in Yemen. Over time, it expanded to incorporate and subjugate various ethnic groups into a feudal, monarchic empire.

Apart from the Italian colonisation of Eritrea in 1888, the indigenous feudal aristocracy was able to resist European colonisation until the brutal Italian invasion in 1935. It is estimated that some 7% of the Ethiopian population died during the occupation.

Ethiopian and Eritrean guerrilla forces and British troops defeated the Italian occupiers in 1941. Eritrea was taken as a British colony (later gifted to the safely subservient Ethiopian regime).

Contrary to the nonsense about Haile Selassie's demi-god status peddled by Rastafarians, the Selassie monarchy was repressive, exploitative, and parasitic. It did not lift a finger to aid the starving population during famines, but spent lavishly on celebrations of its anniversary. It was a safe citadel for US imperialism in an African



continent seething with anti-colonial movements, the anti-apartheid movement, and demands for African socialism, and the looming intervention of Soviet influence, later to morph into Soviet social-imperialism.

The Beginnings

In the sixties, the Ethiopian proletariat was tiny, and the peasants and pastoral people severely exploited. There was some growth in the petit bourgeoisie, and the expanding education system provided opportunities for petit bourgeois and middle class, and some working class, students to gain some formal education, and to come into contact with ideas outside the



restrictive feudal ideological framework. Increasing numbers went to study in Europe and the US, where they established a substantial network of revolutionary groups, strongly influenced by student radicalism spreading across the western world. Reformist groups, focused on overthrowing the monarchy, also developed, and were increasingly attracted to socialist ideas rather than pro-western capitalist ideas peddled by the US and its agencies. The demands of the student movement for improved welfare and treatment developed into demands for democracy and, increasingly, socialism.

The various nationalities that comprised the empire also generated serious consideration of their welfare, and their rights to self-determination.

Concurrently, and influenced by similar concerns and the changing political climate, disgruntled junior military officers, originating outside the traditional aristocracy, considered their future and that of their country.

Repression of opposition by the regime forced the left toward a revolutionary solution. Revolutionary students inside and outside the country studied Marxist-Leninist-Maoist theory; they wrestled with the strategic question of the long-term building of a mass-based revolutionary movement, as against the attraction of immediate violent action, like plane hijackings, supposedly to destabilise the regime and ignite mass insurrection.

Despite widespread discussion of Lenin's ideas about the importance of national self-determination, the movement never came to grips with this issue, so pivotal in a multinational empire of subjugated peoples. It remained

largely ambivalent about Eritrea, despite the growing strength of its national liberation movement.

Military Coup

In 1974, junior officers took advantage of the seething popular discontent and the dysfunction of the regime and overthrew the monarchy over a period of several months. The junta, called the Derg, introduced some popular reforms, abolishing feudalism and dispossessing the old aristocratic class, although these reforms largely lacked follow through, and made little material difference to the people. The Derg stressed

national unity and started to suppress popular action. The Derg had hijacked the revolution.

The coup precipitated a massive split in the socialist movement. One group, Meison, threw in its lot with the Derg, seeing the supposed left-leaning junta as a vehicle for the establishment of socialism. Meison saw an opportunity to get close to the throne to influence the Junta to move even further to the left. Meison was successful in enticing the dominant Derg

faction toward some supposed version of socialism. By the second half of the seventies, the Derg had purged and executed many of its original participants, and adopted Marxism-Leninism, or, rather, a convenient interpretation that suited its dictatorial top-down imposition of some change.

These Meison opportunists were drawn to the attractions and trappings of power and influence, and increasingly slid down the slippery slope of justifying more and more repression and rule by decree as necessary to defeat the so-called anarchist opponents of the revolution. Included in their number was the most militant,

Revolutionary students inside and outside the country studied Marxist-Leninist-Maoist theory; they wrestled with the strategic question of the long-term building of a mass-based revolutionary movement, as against the attraction of immediate violent action, like plane hijackings, supposedly to destabilise the regime and ignite mass insurrection.



revolutionary sloganeer from the US diaspora, who had frequently turned up to international meetings barefoot and in dungarees, and condemned others for their lack of revolutionary zeal. He quickly and easily slid into bed with the military junta as a supposed short-cut to socialism (The lesson: beware ultra-left super-militants; their militancy and commitment are usually skin-deep.)

During this period, the USA was utterly flummoxed by events, and, after its defeat in Vietnam, rather paralysed. The USSR, assisted by its allies in Eastern Europe and Cuba, steadily intervened, providing military training and hardware, educational opportunities and increasingly strident and demanding political guidance. They provided Marxist-Leninist rhetoric combined with increasing authoritarian control and repression of the supposed “anarchists” and “ultra-leftists”. The Soviets demanded access to Ethiopian markets and investment opportunities and the blocking of Chinese economic and political activity.

The majority of revolutionaries saw the danger of top-down, undemocratic military government, regardless of its sloganeering and a few superficial changes. They continued to build a revolutionary party and popular movement, demanding real democracy through a People's Revolutionary Government, land reform and trade union rights.

The revolutionaries established a vanguard party, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP). They grappled with the issues of legal/illegal agitation, agitation and organisation in urban and rural areas, and the effective use of revolutionary violence. The relative youth and inexperience of the organisation and its members helped to enable the Derg to steal the march, and to grab the initiative.

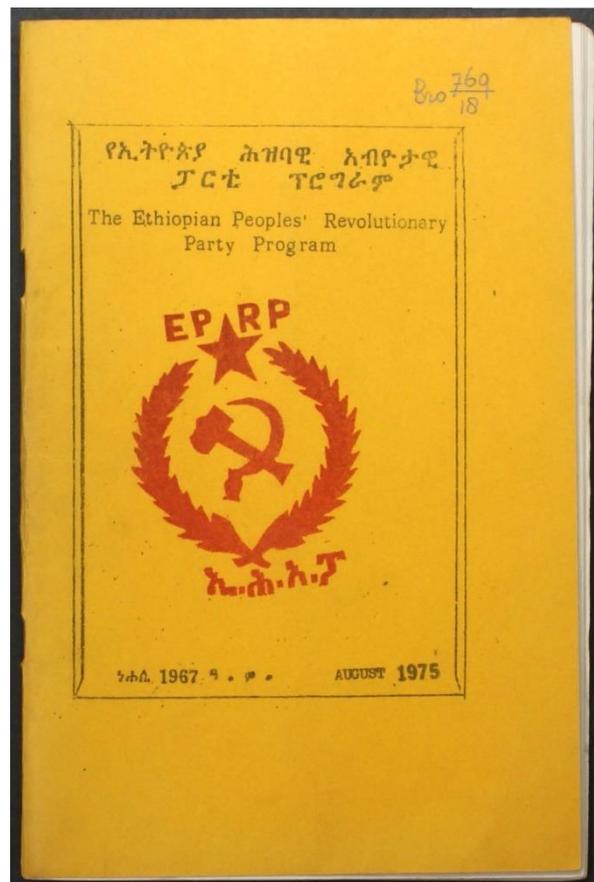
By this stage, the military Derg, the Meison opportunists and the EPRP all claimed adherence to Marxism-Leninism, and all sported the hammer and sickle in their signage. The EPRP also faced the difficulty of explaining its socialist

credentials at the same time as opposing the Derg's and the Soviet Union's fake socialism.

The EPRP cleverly exploited the legal opportunities provided by the Derg's imposition of a policy of sending students to rural areas, supposedly to help the peasants but really to get rid of pesky students. The students agitated among the peasants, winning considerable support for real land reform.

The EPRP also won leadership of the CELU trade union federation, which had been established by the Selassie regime with support and funding from the AFL-CIO, the US trade union federation doing the bidding of US imperialism. CELU then severed its links with the AFL-CIO, prompting the US to regard the CELU as a Soviet stooge, at the same time as the Derg accused it of being a US stooge because it opposed the Derg.

The EPRP established an urban militia to wrest control of urban neighbourhoods and protect the party and the people from increasingly murderous repression.





The EPRP organisation was completely underground. The leadership was genuinely collective and publicly anonymous – there was no singling out of some outstanding leader, as had happened in Russia, China and Eritrea. The EPRP was very well-organised and dedicated, a remarkable feat for such a young organisation. A lot of its propaganda appears to this writer as rather jargonistic and rhetorical, but that is really for Ethiopians to judge.

As the Derg repression intensified into nightly house-to-house searches, the Meison opportunists completed their treacherous descent by compiling lists of revolutionaries for Derg agents to seek out and arrest, and usually murder. The vicious repression left pools of blood on the streets every night. It is estimated that at least 250,000 people were murdered.

EPRP supporters continued public displays of defiance, but were steadily cut down.

As the EPRP was decimated, internal divisions emerged. The repressive environment made it difficult, if not impossible, to convene to thrash out the differences which had been festering unresolved for some time. In the end, the leadership decamped for the rural areas, especially Tigray in the far north, to try to continue the revolutionary struggle via a rural guerrilla war. The EPRP came into serious conflict with the Tigray People's Liberation Front, which was fighting for Tigrayan self-determination.

Ultimately, the Derg and its Soviet and Cuban backers became so unpopular and probably dysfunctional that they were overthrown by a coalition of ethnic-based movements, led by the

Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which itself was later defeated by a nationalist force that is today attacking and repressing Tigray. Ethiopia is today effectively a Chinese and US sweatshop. The economic, political and ethnic problems are completely unresolved, except that Eritrea has won its independence. It has joined the latest Ethiopian government attack on Tigray, following the withdrawal of the TPLF from the government in November 2020.

Some Lessons

Ethiopian fascism was not the dictatorship of a strong indigenous finance capital – there was no serious finance capital. Horst questions whether the “fascism” of the Derg really fit into the analysis offered up by the likes of Dimitrov” and seems to suggest that broader definitions of fascism allowing for greater variability may be required.. Dimitrov's definition does not address the mass movements that fascist leaders have been able to generate – movements usually of disparate groupings with a range of grievances, including the disillusioned who feel they have been deprived of their birthright; the envious; declassée and lumpen types; those who have fallen in the pecking order; conservative people whose lives have been disrupted in various ways; people who fear disorder will threaten their security or well-being. Fascist takeovers can also result in some change to economic control. Some of the fascist movement members can displace some of the old wealth, the new leaders get their snouts in the trough. Their sponsors can displace previous backers. In Ethiopia's case, the Soviets displaced US imperialism. Ethiopian fascism was not the dictatorship of finance capital - there was no serious finance capital. So, broader definitions of fascism allowing for greater variability seem to be required.

Socialism can only be achieved through mass action and must be democratic. As Rosa Luxemburg said “Socialism will not and cannot be created by decrees; nor can it be established by any government, however socialist. It must be created by the masses...” The western cheer squads and apologists who supported the Derg



and defended its vicious repression, would do well to ponder this principle.

Further, Marx concluded quite correctly after the defeat of the Paris Commune in 1871, that the revolution cannot merely take over the existing state; it must destroy the capitalist state and create a completely new state apparatus that involves the masses in ruling the new society.

The Communist Party must always struggle for an accurate understanding of the long-term strategies required to build mass support and organisation, and against cheap and easy, or apparently militant, shortcuts. Ultra-leftism is easy and shallow, but leads to disaster, to the destruction of the communist forces.

The accompanying article in this issue of *Australian Communist* about the underground organisation in Shanghai shows how the strategies, priorities and mentality, based on understanding, determination, discipline and patience, must match the situation, and the relative strengths of the revolution and of its enemies at any particular time. The Party needs the maturity and discipline to call on and call off a particular struggle as appropriate, and to see how each struggle fits into the big picture.

Unfortunately, the courageous, beautiful young people who publicly defied the Derg's butchery were too impetuous, did not understand the need to go to ground, to marshal their forces for a protracted struggle. When faced with such a superior force, they needed to go back to basics, consolidate their underground organisation, carefully link up with their mass base, and start to

rebuild (Easy for us to say of course, but lessons must be learnt)

Opportunism must be called out and resisted. This other short cut, falling for reform opportunities rather than digging in for the long haul revolutionary struggle, is also a dead-end, and a slippery slope toward craven sell-out.

When and how to employ revolutionary violence is an issue that has bedevilled the revolutionary movement world-wide. Too often revolutionaries see violence as an offensive tool to destabilise the regime, to wipe out reactionaries, or to spark an insurrection among the masses. However,

revolutionary violence is initially a defensive weapon, led by political agitation and organisation, to be adopted by the masses when they can or will no longer tolerate government oppression and violence. As a people's militia or whatever the organisational form, develops sufficient strength and confidence and mass support, it can move gradually and carefully toward a dual power in which it can

start to match and neutralise the violence of the ruling class.

The title of the book belies this problem. Che Guevara represented the tendency to resort to violent struggle to spark the masses, as instanced unsuccessfully in Bolivia.

Ho Chi Minh, on the other hand, championed the mass political movement that prepared, guided and underpinned the successful military revolutionary struggle.

The Communist Party must always struggle for an accurate understanding of the long-term strategies required to build mass support and organisation, and against cheap and easy, or apparently militant, shortcuts. Ultra-leftism is easy and shallow, but leads to disaster, to the destruction of the communist forces.

Like Ho Chi Minh! Like Che Guevara! is available from **Foreign Languages Press – Marxist-Leninist-Maoist Publishing House** – <https://foreignlanguages.press> & <https://flpress.storenvy.com>



From the Archives:

Underground Party Work in Shanghai Before Liberation:

A talk to a visiting group of CPA (M-L) members, December 1978

During the socialist era of China, when the Chinese Communist Party under Chairman Mao's leadership maintained relations of equality and mutual respect with Marxist-Leninist parties in the capitalist world, our Party was one of many to send delegations to China at the invitation of the CCP's International Liaison Department.

The following talk was delivered to our Party's delegation in Shanghai in December 1978. It was given by the then Head of the United Front Department of the Shanghai Party Committee, who was formerly Party Secretary of the Shanghai Underground pre-Liberation.

At the end of 1978, Deng Xiaoping was in the ascendancy, and an acute struggle was occurring over which road – the socialist or the capitalist - he would lead China along.

The spirit of proletarian internationalism still prevailed in various departments and at various levels of the CCP. The following talk was delivered in that spirit as a genuine attempt to share with us some relevant experiences from the Chinese revolution.

Our Party has not had relations with the Chinese Party for many years.

Shanghai pre-1949 may seem a world away from Australia in 2021. Nevertheless, the presentation includes many valuable insights and lessons for communists doing patient mass work among the people that are useful for our conditions today.

The characteristic feature of the Chinese revolution was that we surrounded the cities from the countryside. Our bases were built in the country.

For a long period, our main work was in the countryside and city work was supplementary. Our armed forces, including the PLA [People's Liberation Army], played the main role in Liberation. Underground work played a supplementary role. On the eve of Liberation, our underground Party committee did preparatory work in cooperation with the PLA.

Taking the countryside as the main base did not make underground work in the city unnecessary. Our final aim was to liberate the strongholds of enemy – the cities – so without underground work, the liberation of the whole country was impossible.

The principle of underground work in the cities as formulated by Chairman Mao was to have well-selected cadres working underground for a long period, accumulating their strength and biding their time.

The principle of having well-selected cadres underground for a long time was a very positive principle because the cities were under the rule of the enemy, especially Shanghai.



The enemy was much stronger than us, we were weak, and they had troops, gendarmes, jails etc. They were the rulers, we were the oppressed. They were hundreds of times stronger than us. They had overwhelming superiority over us.

In order to win victory, we had to change the situation so that we became stronger and the enemy weaker than us. It took time to accumulate our own strength and reach that point. It was very protracted.

In the light of this, we adopted the principle of underground work. We had to cover up our activities. This was determined by subjective and objective factors. In order to implement the principle of having well-selected cadres working underground for a long period, accumulating their strength and biding their time, we had to oppose ultra-left tendencies.

Chairman Mao pointed out that underground work in the cities should avoid adventurous actions such as shouting slogans. On the contrary, we should be sure and steady.

Li Lisan pushed an adventurous line and Wang Ming pushed a dogmatic line, hence we exposed our forces in the city. Their opinion was in favour of uprisings in the city: they believed that if there was an uprising in one city, followed by uprisings in other cities, then nation-wide victory would be won.

As a result of the implementation of their wrong lines, we lost almost 100 per cent of our underground forces in Shanghai in 1935.

For instance, we only had a few comrades, but they ordered us to attack the police station – this was “striking at a stone with an axe”.

Instead of doing deep-going work among the masses, they wanted to organize festivals such as May Day; hence, our forces were exposed.

At a later stage, when our strength was reduced to a very great extent, they organized so-called “flying meetings”: they told the comrades at what time to hold a meeting at a certain place, like a street corner, and then, when the time came, they’d let off fireworks and hold the meeting. The police came and arrested quite a few.

The aim and form of our underground organisation was for the purpose of accumulating our strength and strengthening ourselves. So, we implemented Chairman Mao’s principles for underground work: go deep among the masses, accumulate our strength, and bide our time.

This was the general picture of underground work from the beginning of the period of resistance to Japan up until the Liberation of Shanghai.

When opportunities arose, we recruited Party members and consolidated Party organisation; later, when other opportunities arose, we repeated the process.

At first, we only had several dozen members; during the anti-Japanese War, we recruited several hundred; by the time of their surrender in September we had about a thousand; by the time peace was achieved, we had several thousand; by 1947, we had 3000; and by the time of Liberation, we had about 8-9000.

When we recruited Party members the mass movement was on the upsurge and the people were in high spirits. When the PLA was about to liberate Shanghai, the people were in high spirits and there was much recruitment. We regarded these opportunities as good opportunities.



We recruited Party members at the high tide of revolutionary and mass struggles. Hence, we accumulated strength and consolidated Party organization. This enabled us to have enough strength to unite with the broad masses and then carry out telling blows at the enemy.

On the eve of Liberation, we succeeded in organizing hundreds of thousands of people in people's security guards to prevent KMT [Kuomintang ie. the Nationalists] sabotage of schools, factories etc.

Finally, we cooperated with the PLA in the process of liberating Shanghai.

Underground work in the city has 3 tasks:

1. to organize and unite workers, peasants, intellectuals, students and teachers and build Party organization amongst them. These are the main base of the revolution;
2. to do united front work: to develop our unity with various sections of the traders and other classes of people, especially the middle class or intermediate class, and the national bourgeoisie;
3. to plant our people in the enemy's camp so as to disintegrate the enemy.

Of the 3 tasks, the first one is the main one. Once we have mass bases and we have support from the main base, and have Party organization there, we can carry out united front work. This was our main task. Of course, it was important to plant our people in the enemy camp, but this was just in cooperation with the mass struggle.

Task One: Organisation of the Masses

Our Party's organization was underground, but its mass work was open. That is, we tried to make full use of opportunities for open work and for full use of the law so as to organize people on a mass scale. The reason for this was that if the mass organizations were underground, they could only organize a few of the masses; in that case, there would be underground mass organizations and underground Party organizations, so the former would just duplicate the latter and its scope would be very small.

Our Party members were well-selected competent comrades. One party member could give leadership to two, ten or a hundred of the masses. On the other hand, mass organization was extensive and the more extensive the better.

So, we made full use of the legal opportunities for open work, the opportunities that the laws of the enemy allowed us. We also made use of social conventions and organized all sorts of mass organizations. Some examples included trade unions among the workers, student unions, federations of teachers, a shop assistants union, a bank clerks union. In this way we organized the basic masses, eighty or ninety per cent of the population. Then we had their basic strength to rely on.

For workers, our general policy was to organise trade unions.

In our historical conditions, we had certain peculiarities. For example, in the anti-Japanese war, the KMT ran to far-away places but we stayed and did underground work. Hence, when the Japanese surrendered, we were here and the KMT were far away. This enabled us to organise trade unions by the time the KMT came back. Then the KMT came and ordered that all trade unions be registered. To make use of their laws we registered them. Later on, they demanded not only registration, but also said "We'll send our people to the trade unions". We opposed this at first, but finally had to agree.



By this time, the main trade unions were in our hands. The textile workers, machine builders, bus and tram workers, water industry etc. The KMT suspected these trade unions and knew they were in progressive hands so they tried to suppress them.

For instance, there was the trade union for tramways workers in the French Concession. After a strike, they were ordered to disperse and to have new elections. The result was that we Communists and our sympathizers were elected. After a year, they still had their doubts and thought the trade union was in progressive hands, so they ordered a new election. We changed our personnel and kept it in our hands.

Some trade unions were controlled by the KMT, although we controlled the important ones. We called those KMT trade unions “yellow”; all the same, we participated in them. We opposed the bad trade union leaders under KMT control: if they were corrupt or led luxurious lives, we seized on this to expose and isolate them. The KMT officials never sought to benefit the workers or protect their welfare. Although we had no official positions, we dealt with those matters where we could and finally the workers elected us to the leadership.

We made analyses of the KMT trade union officials. We made it a good analysis so we could be sure who the die-hards were, and we isolated them. Many KMT officials served the government but it did not follow that they were bent on opposing the workers, so we worked to neutralize these people. There were a few who talked of democracy and who were sympathetic with the progressive forces, so we worked to win these people over. The point was to isolate the die-hards.

For example, in the postal workers trade union there were two factions and one was very reactionary, whilst the other was somewhat sympathetic to our Party. The faction that had sympathy with our side was headed by Du Xuefan, so we gave some support to him and he was pleased. As a result, he succeeded in controlling the postal workers trade union. We used him as a sign board. In the end, the trade union was controlled by us although in appearance it was still a KMT trade union. Finally, Du Xuefan came across to the Liberated Areas while the KMT fled to Taiwan. Now he is Vice-Chairman of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions.

Of course, not much work was done among the peasants, although some was done among the semi-peasants. Firstly, we formed co-operatives. Secondly, we asked teachers to do work among the parents through their students. We were fairly strong within the student movement. Generally speaking, we controlled the whole of the student movement – the KMT had very little influence. We also established organisations among teachers of secondary schools and among the university professors. These were mainly federations of teachers.

Another form of mass organisation was for recreational and cultural activities. These were comprehensive, general organisations. They were not political in appearance. Some names of the organisations were the federation for the Friendship of Clubs, the Federation for Strengthening Friendship etc. Through these we carried out cultural and sporting activities with great variety, things of which the masses were fond. In such organisations, one’s Party membership was deeply concealed; the masses didn’t know who was a Party member – we just appeared to be singers, writers, scholars etc.

Take the singing group as an example. In the beginning they just sang popular songs; later on, they sang progressive songs; later still, they sang revolutionary songs. Then, they were not just satisfied with singing, but wanted to do practical work. So, many people came into the Party after they’d started with singing, and then came into the guerrilla armies and the Liberated areas.



In this way, their activities developed from the lower to the higher level. That was the general process. We had a library, for example. There were works on economics, politics, the classics, novels etc. Then gradually we got the readers in touch with Lu Xun, Guo Moruo and other revolutionary writers. In appearance, it was just an ordinary mass organisation for recreational activities, but in the process, much mass work was done at this level.

The picture was like this: there were some activities at a higher level, some at a middle level, and some at a lower level. Even when those at the lower level made progress, the need for organisation at the lower level remained.

Then there were people who made no progress. They only wanted to sing progressive songs. That was alright. We didn't oppose or make fun of them. At least they wouldn't oppose us either.

The third form of organisation was to make use of those organisations already set up by other people, for example the YMCA and the YWCA. They had mass followings, so we also participated in them. We went there and did mass work. They had libraries and even schools – they called them labourers' schools. The YWCA had two schools in Shanghai. Almost all of their teachers were recommended by us. They just taught as ordinary teachers in the schools, and didn't do Party work in their classrooms. But they became friends of the students and did Party work outside the schools. We arranged Party members to go there as students, and they did the work amongst the students.

There were other similar organisations, for example, the natives' associations. People from Guangdong Province, for example, formed their own associations for Guangdongese. We made use of their associations too.

Most of these organisations were run by rich people. Their purpose was to spread their own influence. If you came from the same place, they would help you, if you had no food or work, so you'd feel obliged to them. But we made use of even these organisations.

The fourth form was individual work.

The fundamental principle of organising the masses is to proceed from the concrete desires of the masses. If the masses have certain problems or difficulties, we must proceed from that to carry out mass work.

So, the first three types of organisation were of an advanced type. The fourth type was a preliminary organisation.

For instance, some of the masses formed groups within which people could help each other financially. They pooled money so anyone in need of help could be helped. These were like cooperatives or credit unions.

For instance, when 10 workmates pooled ten yuan, then they had 100 yuan. If one was in difficulty, he could borrow it and repay it later without interest. As a result, the relationship among the ten was very close. In this process we could do our work, we would have a mutual help group that could solve some problems but not all of them. To solve all of the problems we needed to make revolution. There were many kinds of organisations like this in pre-Liberation days.

When the Japanese aggressors were here, the situation was very serious for they didn't allow any organisation of more than three people. So, we put out the call for people to do study, and work well, and form friends with all those around them.



If a Party member was a bright student in the past, then he or she would have high prestige among the students; even if we had no organisation among the students when they had problems, we could go to talk to that well-known one and through them, solve the problems.

If a comrade had worked in a factory, learned a trade and mastered a skill, then the reactionary trade union leaders and bosses would not be able to find fault with him, so we had good influence among the masses.

When we did this, we took root among the masses no matter how severe the situation was.

The fifth form was semi-open and progressive organisations.

Such organisations came into being amidst struggles, for example, after Japan's surrender a movement to demand peace and democracy took place. This was against civil war. This gave rise to a progressive organisation, a federation. Within the federation there were workers, students, professionals, cultural workers and businessmen and democrats. They convened a demonstration of 60,000 people. In this demonstration, representatives of the professionals, democrats and businessmen came out into the open, but the comrades under them were not out in the open. When this demonstration was over, the name of the organisation was still there but we didn't use it. We used it in 1946, then didn't use it; then used it in 1947 in the campaign against starvation.

Our tactics were formulated by Chairman Mao: to carry out struggle with advantage and restraint. By "advantage", he meant having good grounds or a good reason; by "restraint" he meant having to stop when a certain level of struggle was reached.

"Good grounds" meant that our slogans were reasonable or justifiable from the point of view of the masses. Only then can we win their broad sympathy. If the demands of the slogans were too high or too low then we would become divorced from the masses.

"With advantage" meant that we should be fully prepared and be in a position to ensure victory. It was important to win victory in the first struggle, otherwise the people would become discouraged. We won wages struggles but used them at the same time to accumulate our strength. If we won wages struggles but had our Party organisation broken or Party members arrested, then that was not advantageous.

By "restraint" meant that we had to stop a struggle in good time, when we had won a certain extent of victories. It was not advisable to embark on struggle with the intent of solving many problems with one struggle. Because our victory was protracted, final victory could only be won after hundreds or thousands of struggles. If one had the idea to win final victory in a single struggle, then the demands put forward would be too high.

Another thing was to integrate the economic struggle with the political struggle, scattered struggles with the unified struggle, open struggles with closed struggles, legal work with illegal work. In 1947 we launched a large-scale struggle against hunger, the KMT and the interference of US imperialism. This was a large-scale struggle in which hundreds of thousands took part. The struggle started with the aim to oppose hunger, but because the KMT engaged in civil war, prices rose and they adopted the policy of freezing wages. The workers then demanded an increase in wages.

At the beginning, this struggle was carried out in a scattered way. Today, some workers in one factory launched a petition; tomorrow, some workers in another factory did the same thing. The struggle was small-scale, scattered.



Students received a few dollars in allowances from the government, but could only buy one breakfast with a whole month's subsidy. So, the students went on a hunger strike. On 20 May the students advanced the slogan "We should obtain food from the big cannons". Their meaning was "The KMT launched the civil war, therefore we are starving".

Hence, the struggle against starvation was connected with the struggle against civil war, the KMT and US imperialism. As a result, the economic struggle was integrated with the political struggle, the legal with the illegal, the scattered with the systematic.

The KMT was frightened. The KMT promised to partially increase workers' wages. Once the KMT promised that, we brought the struggle to an end because at that time it was impossible to force the KMT to cease civil war, to give up the dictatorship, to drive out the US.

By doing so, the political struggle reverted to the economic, the illegal to the legal, and the systematic to the scattered.

The main orientation of our leadership of the struggle should be attached to the consistent day to day work, to economic work, welfare work. Only when the opportunity arose was it possible to shift the emphasis to large-scale work. This was the basis of large-scale work.

When we were under an adventurist or dogmatic line every economic struggle was turned into a political struggle, every scattered struggle into large-scale struggle. When this line was followed, we were defeated.

When the workers in a factory went on strike, we had to analyse the concrete conditions. If they wished to go on strike it was OK; if they didn't, it was wrong to try and force them, for in that way we might expose our own strengths and weaknesses without winning any victory.

Following the development of the revolutionary movement and struggle, we had to develop the broad mass movement under favourable conditions in order to slowly temper and test the advanced elements in the process of struggle.

Although we continued to enrol Party members in different stages according to the Party rules, there were two main aspects:

1. they accept the Party program and rules and the fight for communism
2. more importantly, they take part in the practical struggle of certain organisations.

The Party program had both a maximum program and a minimum program. The maximum program was to fight for communism; the minimum program was to fight against feudalism, imperialism and the comprador bourgeoisie.

Therefore, we had to see that they were very firm in the practical struggle against the people's three enemies, for this was the real manifestation of consciousness.

When they had shown through strikes and political struggles that they are tempered, active, brave and have asked to participate in the Party and have an interest in Marxism-Leninism, then they have accumulated sufficient criteria and we would enrol these activists in the Party. We did not see those people who were recommended for membership as having to spout off phrases from Marxist-Leninist books: we tested them on the basis of practical struggles. Actually, in our enrolment of Party members, especially workers, the study of Marxism-Leninism and theoretical study comes after their enrolment into the Party and occurs as part of the life of the Party.



The other important aspect is to know the political connections, the family and personal connections of the nominee. In the case of those people enrolled into the Party in a factory this was not a big problem: we lived together and took part in practice together and knew each other very well, thus preventing enemies from slipping in. We didn't just enrol people who were active in one strike or struggle, nor those who could speak Marxist-Leninist words very well. If we enrolled them through one strike or one struggle or one meeting, then this was dangerous, for it was possible for bad people to come in.

So, we did this in very secret conditions, with one-on-one contact. But even under conditions of secrecy we had our Party life, our Party branches or groups. We organised according to what was permissible at the time.

For example, if we had three workers in one factory, we would organise them into a branch. If we had more than 3 in one factory, we would organise them into a branch and several groups. For example, if we had nine members, we would organise them into one branch and three groups of two.

There would be no knowledge of each other as Party members between the groups, and they could not contact each other. In general, the three-person branch had one as secretary, one responsible for organisational work and one for propaganda work.

In a large factory of several thousand workers, we might have several dozen Party members. We might have several branches working in parallel, but no contact between them. These branches would be organised to take part in the work as first front, second front, and third front. For example, in an electricity factory when there was an election, one branch would take part in this open work; in the next election, it would change to the second front, and so on, so that not all Party members would struggle on the front line – some would be held in reserve.

At the grass roots we would have this kind of organisation, but at the provincial or city level we would have both organisations according to trade (eg. workers, teachers) and also according to particular districts.

Our financial revenue was mainly through Party members' fees. Our worker members were small in numbers and could only give a small amount but others, like bank workers, might give a bit more. We also received donations to the Party. Party finances were also supplied by rear areas and base areas. We only had a few full-time Party organisers as professionals, so we didn't need to spend much money on full-time workers. Even we professional revolutionaries also had our occupations and professions.

Task Two: Carry Out United Front Work

The united front was one of the three major weapons of the Party. Our strategy was: rely on the progressives, win over the middle forces, and isolate the die-hard reactionaries. That meant making a class analysis of the various strata of the people.

For example, we had to organise the basic masses in the city, the workers, students and intellectuals – we had to rely on these people. On the other hand, the KMT reactionaries were our enemy. We had to aim our strike at them.

We aimed to win over the middle forces – the national bourgeoisie, the upper strata of the petty-bourgeoisie (the professionals, cultural workers of high position and enlightened personages).

We had to make further analysis of the reactionaries, to sort out the most die-hard element for example within the army officers, the agents, the police and so on. We had to sort out the most die-hard so as to narrow the target of attack.



These enemies were not a monolithic bloc, they comprised various factions and groups, and we had to make use of the internal contradictions and win over opponents of the most die-hard reactionaries.

Various factions within the reactionaries represented different interests. For example, in the KMT army there were miscellaneous troops and troops who favoured the KMT, as well as elements not firmly opposed to the CCP, so we could make use of this.

Within the broad united front, we could even have a small united front with some of the reactionaries: they could be temporary allies of our work.

The political program of the united front varied in different periods, for example during the anti-Japanese War it was to oppose the Japanese and the traitors; during the Civil War it was to oppose Chiang and the US. As the political program during the anti-Japanese War was to oppose the Japanese and the traitors, we could have a united front with those who supported the British and US imperialists because of the contradictions between them and the pro-Japanese elements. At a later stage, when the main struggle was against US imperialism and Chiang Kai-shek, we could unite with all those who opposed them no matter what circle they belonged to, even religious circles.

In united front work, we had to pay attention to those people with whom we wished to unite. We should not proceed only from our own interests. If they joined us on the basis of their own interests, then we had to take account of this.

An example was the national bourgeoisie. The US dumped its goods onto the Chinese market and this did great harm to the national bourgeoisie. So, we took up the slogan of opposing the dumping of US goods on our market. This won for us the support of the national bourgeoisie.

We also made concessions in the course of the struggle. When we opposed US imperialism, we called for strikes in the US-run factories but thought twice about strikes in national bourgeois factories. If the strike might cause the closure of a national bourgeois factory, we had to think twice about it. The aim was to win the national bourgeoisie to our side and carry out struggle against them at the same time. If the national bourgeoisie took the opportunity to exploit the workers more severely, then we struggled against them.

United front work was carried out not only on the upper strata but also in every factory and every school.

When we formed a united front in a school, we included the students, the professors and the president, and later on included parents. For example, in the anti-hunger struggle, teachers and professors were refused wage rises and remained poor; when they demanded a wage increase, we organised the students to support them.

As the KMT government engaged in civil war much money was spent on war, so the expenditure on education was reduced; as a result, the teachers and professors did not have enough money for their livelihood, so we put forward our united front slogans "Save Education!" and "Increase Money for Education".

Take Customs – the superintendents were all British or US, there was only one Chinese. We formed clubs for the Chinese workers in Customs and invited the Chinese superintendent to be the President. He thought it was just a club for reading and recreation, but we did our political work under his cover. Then we were able to raise the level of struggle in Customs, and when the struggle against US dumping came, we said to the Chinese superintendent "The US is smuggling. You are Chinese – organise the Chinese Customs workers to deal with the smugglers". He had to do this.



On the eve of the Liberation of Shanghai we had to do work to protect factories, customs, schools etc. We said to the Chinese superintendent, "You must protect the archive and records. If you agree we will protect your position". The superintendent was retained in his post after Liberation and worked at the central level. He has since passed away.

Task Three: Plant Our People in the Enemy Camp

An important part of our work was to plant people in the KMT police, army and agents' organisations. That depended on the conditions for doing so.

We first got to know the social connections of Party members. Perhaps their father or a close family friend worked in the enemy camp. We would encourage them to make close friends so as to get the opportunity to work there. The first step was to make friends with the people inside the enemy camp by making use of the social connections with them. Then, through the Party member concerned, we would introduce more people into the enemy camp.

We carried out systematic work among the police. There were British, French and other imperialist concessions in Shanghai. Some of the police were foreigners and some were Chinese, but the foreigners bullied and suppressed the Chinese police. Most were bankrupt peasants who had come to Shanghai to work. On the eve of the Liberation of Shanghai, the conditions for us became more favourable because most of the peasants were from Liberated provinces such as Hubei.

Before Liberation there were 20 police districts in Shanghai. We had our people in all of them. We had Party branches in every police division and also in the prisons. We had Party branches in the weapons repair factory. We maintained strict single line contact with people in the enemy camp. Generally speaking, those cadres participated in no open mass struggles; they only tried to get information and get to control important sections.

On the eve of Liberation, those cadres were sent to supervise the heads of police, to keep an eye on them, to control the archives and the weapons. If it was necessary, they could take up these guns and coordinate with the PLA.

We also did work within the KMT army. We made friends with the commanders, with officers above regimental level, over a long period and took no other action – just made friends with them. It was only on the eve of Liberation that our people explained Party policy and encouraged them to stage uprisings and come over to our side.

There was special leadership in charge of this work. Ordinary Party leaders had no connection with this. Of course, there were many ways to enter the enemy camp: we just had to use our brains on the basis of local conditions. Sometimes the government organs of the KMT advertised for personnel in the papers. We went along and sat for the exams.

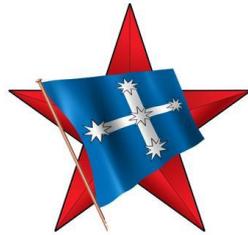
They had military academies where students studied for four years. We instructed cadres to go there and become officers.

There was one unit we wanted to get into, but we couldn't find a proper way. Then we noticed that they had a football team. So, we organised a student football team to play them and get to know them.

Party members in this field must be very reliable politically. Those cadres must be patient and hard-working. Once a cadre works there, his friends may regard him as a reactionary or a bad element.

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