

Proletarian Unity League

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

Chapter 3: "Left" Opportunism in Party-Building Line

A. Party-Building, Party-Formation, and the Vanguard Party

To win victory, the revolutionary cause needs three kinds of unity: communist unity, embodied in a Marxist-Leninist Party; unity of the Party and the proletariat; and unity of all popular forces around the proletariat. Of these three kinds of unity, communist unity is the fundamental condition for victory. Without communist unity embodied in a Marxist-Leninist Party, the proletariat will not take up a consistently revolutionary program, and other popular forces will not rally behind the proletariat. Party-building line consists in reinforcing communist unity.

Party-building begins with the advent of the proletariat and extends through to classless society. The communist movement in this country pursues a party-building line, and so does the Chinese Communist Party. In given periods and in given stages, party-building may assume greater or lesser importance in relation to other tasks. Party-building line assesses the nature of the present period and the present stage, formulating the tasks which correspond to each. As we stated in the first chapter, we regard the construction of a vanguard party as the central strategic task of the present stage. Throughout this stage, party-building is the **central task** of revolutionaries.

Advancing on the central task of the stage requires that the party-building forces grasp a series of subordinate tasks, any one of which may become the **immediate task** at any one moment in the first stage. Marxist-Leninists take up given subordinate tasks as their immediate tasks in order to prepare the conditions for the establishment of the vanguard Party (their central task). For example, in 1901, although party-building was the central task, Lenin argued that the founding of an All-Russian political newspaper constituted the "first step," or immediate task, of the Russian Social-Democrats:

"In our opinion, the starting point of our activities, **the first step** towards creating the desired organization, or, let us say, the **main thread** which, if followed, would enable us steadily to develop, deepen, and extend that

organization, should be the founding of an All-Russian political newspaper." (CW 5, p. 20: our emphasis)

"These immediate tasks take different forms. In the example just cited, the immediate task before the Russian Marxists lay at the organizational level. Lenin remarked that there existed "no disagreements in principle," with the need for a strong organization, and that therefore "what we need at the present moment...is not a solution of the problem in principle but a practical solution." (ibid)

Party-building includes the phase of **party-formation**, that phase preceding and during the calling of a First Party Congress, in which the actual founding of the Party heads up the orders of the day. At that time, party-building stands before the communist forces as their central task, and party-formation as their immediate task. Even after the formation of the Party, party-building continues as the central task; this first stage only ends when the communist party represents the **vanguard** of the working class.

The Marxist-Leninist vanguard party will include the most advanced elements of the proletariat and **lead** the mass of the proletariat and other revolutionary masses against the class enemy. Its leading line will have "settled accounts" theoretically and politically with other trends on all the major questions of the revolution. In the U.S. these questions include: strategy for revolution, the national questions in the U.S., women's emancipation, trade union tactics, legal and illegal work (perspectives on electoral work and on armed struggle), united front tactics as applied to the U.S., the nature of U.S. revisionism and U.S. social democracy, and the analysis of the international situation. That line must further analyze the major non-Marxist trends which threaten to divert the revolutionary movement and the Marxist-Leninist deviations which risk destroying it.

Politically, the vanguard party will not only have "criticized" or denounced" or "drawn lines of demarcation with" erroneous lines, but in fact have exposed those lines **in practice**, broken their influence among decisive sections of the vanguard of the class, achieved successes in driving reformists and other opportunists from genuine mass organizations through the efforts of the masses themselves, and rallied the bulk of the vanguard to its strategic perspective, tactical orientations and methods of work.

The party that emerges from the founding Congress will in all likelihood not be this fully-formed, advanced detachment of the working class. It would be Utopian to await the maturation of all conditions permitting the formation of such a party. The disorganized character of the communist movement, the primitive line and methods of work which the separate groups can sustain,

effectively block the development of those conditions. Moreover, unification of Marxist-Leninists **does not require** such conditions. On the contrary, the construction of a revolutionary party embracing the proletarian vanguard necessitates unifying all the forces **working to build** such a party even though those forces do not themselves amount to the vanguard party.

The unification of all serious Marxist-Leninists usually takes place through the formation of a party, but it need not; it all depends upon the concrete conditions. A lower form of organization--a central pre-party formation, for example--can serve the same purpose, as one did for a time in Viet Nam:

"The founding of a proletarian party, when conditions were not ripe for it, would cause division in the impetuous patriotic movement. In an economically backward colony like Viet Nam in those days, not only the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie, but even the working class lacked a socialist tradition. Therefore, what was needed first was an adequate organization which could help these classes learn about Marxism-Leninism and apply this doctrine to their movement of patriotic struggle. The organization with such a transitional character was the Viet Nam Revolutionary Youth Association founded by President Ho Chi Minh and others patriots in 1925, with a communist group as a core to prepare for the setting up of the Viet Nam Communist Party." (**Outline History of the Viet Nam Workers' Party**, p. 4)

Such a transitional organization¹ works to prepare the conditions for the formation of a revolutionary party. Even after that party is formed, it may not fully merit the title of vanguard, since it may not yet have won over the vanguard to communism. Despite the work of the Viet Nam Revolutionary Youth Association, the first united Viet Nam Communist Party, then called the Indochinese Communist Party, did not contain all the "best elements" of the working class. Therefore the Vietnamese communists continued to take winning the vanguard to communism as their primary strategic task.

"During the years 1930 and 1931, our Party sent a number of cadres and Party members to factories, mining areas and plantations where they lived and laboured with the workers in order to carry on propaganda, lead the struggle there, and foster their own proletarian feelings as well. On the other hand, it paid attention to admitting outstanding workers into its ranks and appointing cadres and members of worker stock to its leading bodies." (Truong Chinh: **Forward Along the Path Charted by K. Marx**, p. 96)

And even though the Chinese Communists adopted the name "Party" at their First Congress, their fledgling character moved them to elect a Central

Bureau to maintain contact with the scattered nuclei rather than a formal Central Committee.

Most usually, however, Marxist-Leninist unification does take place in a "Party form." In other words, at a certain point, a communist party will serve as the necessary vehicle for the building of the revolutionary working class vanguard. The formation of this "skeletal" party will not end the stage in which party-building constitutes the central task; it will only unite the forces working to win over the vanguard of the class in its entirety. The party-form becomes the **guiding nucleus** for the future vanguard party. A single, unified organization of Marxist-Leninists is the instrument in and through which the communists can rally the vanguard in sufficient strength such that the Party may truly become the organized, advanced detachment of its class.

Footnote

¹ The Young Communist League, led by Kim Il Sung and others, appears to have played a somewhat similar role for a time in Korea.