

**Pamphlet
no 13**

THE LENINIST PROLETARIAN PARTY

“Strict adherence to the party principle is the corollary and result of a highly developed class struggle. And, vice-versa, the interests of the open and widespread class struggle demand the development of the strict party principle. That is why the party of the class-conscious proletariat... has always quite rightly combatted the non-party idea, and has worked steadily to establish a closely-knit, socialist workers’ party consistent in its principles”

(Lenin, “The Socialist Party and Non-Party Revolutions”, C.W., Moscow, 1965, Vol.10, p.75)

Many of the people who today claim to serve the fundamental interests of the people are spreading all sorts of erroneous conceptions on the question of the proletarian Party. Some say that the Parti Quebecois is all we need. Others say that the New Democratic Party (NDP) is a proletarian Party. Still others say that we don't need a Party; that the unions are enough, etc... All these conceptions are contrary to the interests of the working people.

There are two fundamental aspects in the struggle which the working class and the different strata of the people are waging against the capitalists and their State.

On one hand, we find the workers struggling to improve their living conditions **within the capitalist system** through partial struggles aimed at winning immediate economic and political gains. Generally speaking, these struggles do not challenge the power the capitalist class wields over the economy and the State.

On the other hand, workers are looking to the possibility of **overthrowing the capitalist order** in which they see, and quite rightly at that, the fundamental cause of their exploitation. This aspect of the class struggle on the part of the workers aims at building a society where the exploitation of man by man will no longer exist; it aims at a socialist, and then a communist society.

The proletarian Party is the essential tool with which workers coordinate and generalize their different partial struggles in order to orient them towards the final goal: the overthrowing of capitalism and the establishment of socialism. The proletarian Party is also the main means with which workers prepare themselves to overthrow the capitalist class once and for all.

But why a Party? Why a proletarian Party? What tasks does this Party have and how does it organize itself so as to be able to carry them out? This pamphlet will try to answer these questions.

The historical experience of the working-class movement proves that to be victorious, the proletarian Party is absolutely necessary

Since the second half of the 19th century, when the first monopolies developed, capitalism became international and the exploitation of the working class was sharpened, the proletariat has tried to seize State power away from the bourgeoisie on several occasions.

But each and every time that the proletariat made an assault on the capitalist fortress without being armed, without being led and organized by its class party, it failed. Because it was without its party, it threw itself spontaneously into battle, without a strategic and tactical plan, without evaluating all the contradictions and the obstacles it had to surmount, and sometimes without rallying behind it all the strata of the people, all the oppressed and exploited people apt to support it.

The successive failures of the French proletariat in 1848-51, and 1871, and of the Russian proletariat in 1905, clearly proved that a genuine proletarian Party is absolutely necessary, not only to seize power from the hands of the bourgeoisie, but also to keep this power in the hands of the proletariat. The workers involved in the Paris Commune, in 1871, were the first in history to succeed in taking hold of the bourgeois State apparatus. Due to the revolutionary situation created by the war between the French and German capitalists, these armed proletarians were able to force the emperor Napoleon III to resign. They established the "power of the people" based on the principles of socialist collectivity. But since they had not completely destroyed the old structures and institutions of the bourgeois State and since they were not led by a sole and united Party at the time of the assault, they were not able to hold out more than two months against the counter-revolutionary offensive launched by the French bourgeoisie. And so, the heroic struggle of the workers of the Paris Commune, under the attacks of the French bourgeoisie... and its ally the German bourgeoisie, was drowned in blood.

Victorious revolutions

But if you look at the revolutions that have been victorious — the Bolsheviks in 1917, the Albanians in 1945 and the Chinese in 1949 — they clearly prove that despite the numerous armed attacks on the part of the capitalist and imperialist forces, despite the numerous betrayals of counter-revolutionaries, **it is possible for the proletariat led by its vanguard organized into a Party to be victorious and to hold on to power.**

The example of the Chinese revolution, proves in a particularly

striking way that no obstacle is insurmountable for the revolutionary movement of a country if it is firmly led by the vanguard of the working class, the proletarian Party.

From 1921 to 1949, under the direction of the Communist Party of China, the vast majority of the people, that is, the peasants dominated by the feudal seigneurs and the old Chinese nobility, slowly but surely fell into line beside the proletariat in its struggle to liberate the country. United, the Chinese people resisted the attacks of Chang Kai-shek's bourgeois nationalist government — which lasted ten years — the assaults of the Japanese imperialists and the final attempt of the Chinese bourgeoisie allied to American imperialists to sweep the communists out of the regions of the country they had succeeded in liberating while at war with Japan. After having made possible the setting up of a republic of people's democracy in 1949, the struggle of the Chinese people, still led by its communist party, to build a genuine socialist society, has carried on. Today, after overcoming economic underdevelopment and waging the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese masses guided by the Party are consolidating the dictatorship of the proletariat.

It is the sum total of the experiences of the international revolutionary movement, its defeats as well as its victories, that have enabled both the verification and the development of the fundamental principles of Marxism. And among these principles is the necessity of the proletarian Party.

What does historical materialism teach us?

Marx and Lenin's theory of history, historical materialism, teaches us, first and foremost, that **the fundamental class contradictions in society are irreconcilable.**

All class contradictions in society are based on the basic contradiction of capitalism: the opposition between Capital and Labour. That means that on one side we find the working class, the principal productive force, which produces value and capital while all the while remaining dispossessed of its means of production and of the fruits of its labour. While on the other side, we find a minority of individuals, the bourgeoisie, which owns the means of production and exploits workers for its own profit. It has seized capital and value for itself in order to get richer and richer even though it itself is totally unproductive.

Those who produce the wealth are completely dispossessed while those who produce nothing, the idle bourgeoisie, own everything. And as monopoly capitalism develops, this contradiction grows sharper. The bourgeoisie is composed of a smaller and smaller number of individuals who make enormous superprofits while the ranks of proletarian masses grow in numbers and become more impoverished.

The contradiction between the two fundamental classes of society, between the bourgeoisie and the working class or the proletariat, is irreconcilable, because capitalism can only exist if this contradiction exists. **This antagonistic opposition is the very essence of capitalism.**

Therefore only the complete abolition of the private ownership of the means of production, and the forms of exploitation which result from it, can really eliminate this contradiction.

The State is the product of class antagonisms

Through a concrete analysis of society, Marx and Engels showed that the way goods are produced and exchanged determines the nature of the transformations at other levels of society.

The political structure of society, **the State, is thus only the product of the class antagonisms brought about by the fundamental contradiction of capitalism.**

The State said Engels, "is therefore, by no means a power forced on society from without; ... it is a product of society at a certain stage of development; it is the admission that this society has become entangled in a insoluble contradiction with itself, that it is cleft into irreconcilable antagonisms which it is powerless to dispel" (quoted by Lenin in **The State and Revolution**).

The role of the State is therefore to maintain the class contradictions between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. And this in itself makes the State the tool of the class which dominates on the economic level, the class which has the greatest interest in maintain-

ning capitalism and its antagonisms, the bourgeoisie. **The State is therefore the instrument of the dictatorship of a minority over the majority.** It imposes the power of the bourgeoisie over the working class and the people either through force and repression, through legal methods or through administrative measures.

In order to get rid of the economic and political exploitative relationship the bourgeoisie imposes on the working class, the working class has only one option: **to expropriate the bourgeoisie and abolish the bourgeois State which keeps the capitalist system in place.**

The necessity of violent revolution

The struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie for State power will never be anything other than a death-struggle. The bourgeoisie will never agree to give up its power because that would mean that it would disappear as a class. Thus it puts up ferocious armed opposition to the proletariat's struggle for power.

Class struggle inevitably leads to revolution if it is oriented towards overthrowing bourgeois power.

Violence was imposed on the people through the capitalist and imperialist bourgeoisie. Since the beginnings of capitalism, the bourgeoisie built its power through economic and political repression of the proletariat. The bourgeoisie has assassinated thousands and thousands of workers as they produced goods for it, and it's killed off thousands in strikes and worker revolts, denying them the strict and most basic minimum even as they produced the capital it shamelessly profited from. It maintains its political power through "special legislation", the army, the police, and through its most favoured method, the pseudo-reformists.

Therefore, only the enemies of the proletariat can claim that peaceful coexistence, reforms and negotiation with the bourgeoisie can lead to the end of capitalist exploitation.

The working class is the leading force of the revolution

The revolution is, in its essence, the final struggle between the two fundamental classes of society. The working class is one of these classes, the class whose interests are most antagonistic with those of the bourgeoisie. Why?

Because due to the place it occupies in production, the working class is the only class that produces value, wealth, Capital. Because the conditions of capitalist production themselves: automation, assembly line work, the concentration of the means of production into enormous factories, etc... have forced the working class to group together, to unify and to wage a daily fight against the bosses, and therefore, to develop an anti-capitalist and proletarian consciousness. It is principally for these two reasons the working class is economically, politically and ideologically the most radically opposed to the laws and values of the capitalist system. Thus it constitutes the leading force of the revolution, the vanguard, the class with the greatest interest in waging the revolution to the end.

But isolated, politically disorganized and without any other weapon besides its spontaneous revolt, the working class will never be able to make revolution. To the objectively revolutionary conditions engendered by the class struggle on the level of economic production, the working class must add another subjective condition, and indispensable condition: the development of its class consciousness and political unity. And this condition can only be fulfilled by the creation and building of its Party.

In order to overthrow the bourgeois State and abolish the private ownership of the means of production, the working class must rally behind it all the other strata of people who have an interest in the revolution; it needs a solid organization capable of ideologically disciplining and arming the entire class. It needs a guide, its vanguard, capable of clearly defining the final and immediate objectives in the revolutionary process, capable of leading the people to the final goal: the overthrowing of the bourgeois State and the setting up of a new proletarian order. Without a Party, the proletariat is an army without a general staff, a class whose political consciousness is embryonic, a class cut off from the social classes and strata that are its allies.

The Party is therefore absolutely indispensable to the proletariat if it is to make revolution. But it is also necessary after the revolution when the working class must ensure its domination over counter-revolutionaries and undertake the building of socialism, bringing the people as a whole along with it.

The characteristics of the proletarian Party

We have just seen how the abolition of capitalist exploitation cannot take place without the socialist revolution, and the struggle to ensure that the socialist path triumphs, can only be victorious if the proletariat, allied to all exploited strata of society, takes leadership. We have also seen how the revolutionary Party of the proletariat is absolutely necessary for overthrowing the bourgeoisie, destroying its instruments of domination and beginning the construction of a socialist society. We are now going to briefly examine what this Party must be to correctly play its revolutionary role.

The proletarian Party is the vanguard organization of the working class

The proletarian Party is an organization of struggle. It is the organization which brings together the most conscious elements, the most determined elements and the most combative elements of the working class and of the other strata of the people who fall into line behind its positions.

In this protracted war, the class struggle pitting proletariat against bourgeoisie, the proletarian Party can be compared to the general staff of an army at war. Like the general staff of any army, the proletarian Party must understand and be able to lead all forms of struggle and all partial battles waged by the various detachments of the people's forces in their struggle against the capitalist class. In other words, the revolutionary Party of the proletariat must be both inseparably linked to all categories, strata and sectors of the working class and working people in general, and at the same time, understand and orient the struggles towards a precise goal: the political overthrow of the bourgeoisie, that is, the taking of State power by the proletariat and its allies, the expropriation of the bourgeoisie and the construction of socialism.

Without this leadership, without this general co-ordination of the struggle on all fronts, the class struggle for the abolition of capitalist exploitation will never be victorious.

Thus, to say that the proletarian Party is the vanguard organization of the proletariat is to say that it **is a part of the proletariat** and not an instrument above it. Without the organic link of the party to the broad working-class masses, the proletarian Party will never be able to play its role of leadership in the revolutionary struggle.

The Proletarian Party is the organized detachment of the vanguard of the proletariat

We've said that the Party is an organization of combat. Thus it is not a social club nor a pressure group. If the Party is an organization of combat, it must be formed essentially of fighters, that is, militants who are mainly devoted to the revolutionary struggle against the bourgeoisie.

The Party's organization must correspond to its revolutionary task. And the main task of the Proletarian Party is to direct the revolutionary struggle against capitalism. This is an enormous and complex task which demands of the Party that it achieve the greatest unity of thought and action within its ranks. A divided battle headquarters cannot lead its troops to victory.

And so, the Party cannot be the simple addition of groups and organizations, each one with its own center of leadership. The Party must be a centralized organization, that is, with a single center. But the Party's center of leadership cannot be imposed. It must be elected, recognized, and accepted by all the members.

We can thus see that the Party as an organization brings together two fundamental characteristics. It is extremely centralized, and yet at the same time it can only develop by assuring a democratic life in its ranks. This form of organization is called **democratic centralism**, the submission of the minority to the majority (Congress), the submission of the inferior levels to the superior levels, the leading role of the leadership committee or central committee between the congresses, conscious and very rigorous discipline, factions within the Party are absolutely forbidden, etc.

Some of the fundamental tasks of the Proletarian Party

As Marx explained in **The Communist Manifesto**, the Party represents the future of the entire workers' movement. That means that the Party has an absolute task and duty to correctly define the objective of the revolution in the different countries and according to the different epochs. Afterwards it must work to have this objective recognized by a growing number of workers. The fundamental task of the Party before taking power, that is, before the proletarian revolution,

is to rally to it not only the great mass of workers but also the great mass of non-proletarian workers. In other words, before taking power, and to take power, the great majority of the working people must be convinced of the correctness of the political line of the Party, and of the necessity to make revolution as the only means of getting rid of those parasites, the capitalists, and their rotten politicians. To achieve this goal, the proletarian Party applies the method of the mass line which, according to Mao Tse-Tung can be defined as follows: **start from the masses to return to the masses.** The mass line method reflects the unshakeable conviction of communists that it's the great masses of the working people who make humanity go forward and not a few brilliant and resourceful men.

Rally the masses to the revolution

As Lenin wrote, imperialism is "the epoch when... the objective conditions are ripe for the destruction of capitalism..." And it's true that at the epoch of imperialism, the present epoch, the means of production are concentrated into the hands of such a small number of monopoly capitalists that their expropriation will benefit not only the working class, but also the great majority of the people.

But how is it that if the objective situation is favorable to socialist revolution, the working class and the labouring people don't rise up and with one blow sweep away capitalism? To this question there is but one answer. And that is that the subjective conditions, that is, the political consciousness, the consciousness of the necessity of the revolution and the degree of organization, are not sufficiently developed so that the working class and the people directly attack the capitalist class. Thus the task of the Party is to develop revolutionary consciousness among the labouring masses.

Link up with the masses and defeat the tactical enemies so as to be able to directly attack the strategical enemy

The bourgeoisie knows only too well the immense strength of the workers. And it fears it enormously. That is why it does everything in its power to divide the workers and the different strata of the people. It possesses a whole series of means such as schools, newspapers, television, films, the Church, etc. to indoctrinate the people with the idea that "the capitalist system, although imperfect, will progressively improve up until the day that the interests of all men will be equally satisfied".

This idea that capitalism can be progressively changed by way of reforms, is also propagated by union and political organizations which claim to struggle on behalf of the workers. The reformist bourgeois parties like the NDP and the PQ thus play the role of deviating the workers' struggle onto the dead end of reformism.

All of these people, union bosses, bourgeois party reformists, etc. are tactical enemies of the proletarian Party since they largely contribute to slowing down the development of the workers' revolutionary class consciousness. It's thus very important for the Party to neutralize them if it wants to rally to it the majority of workers.

Thus, to defeat the strategical enemy, the bourgeoisie — today mainly the imperialist bourgeoisie — and its State, we must unmask and neutralize the bourgeoisie's agents who are among the people, that is, the reformist and conciliating union leadership and the reformist and conciliating parties. That is a condition so, that the path for the complete emancipation of the workers in Canada and in Quebec be cleared.

Thus the proletarian Party has as its task to work everywhere where workers are struggling, with the goal of showing the erroneous path that the reformists and conciliators are leading them on to. It's in the heart of the struggle that the real enemies unmask themselves. It's also in the struggle that friends recognize each other. That's why the proletarian Party must be on the front lines of the battle, side by side with the thousands and thousands of workers who daily resist the oppression and domination of capital.

Parties of the Leninist type and reformist parties

The principles which define the nature of real proletarian Parties were defined by Marx, Lenin, Stalin and Mao Tse-Tung, on the basis of the concrete struggles which they had to wage against the opportunists and reformists. The Bolsheviks, especially, by struggling against all sorts of opportunists within the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) from 1898 to 1912 and within the 11nd International from 1900 to 1919, made possible the establishment of a clear and definitive line of demarcation between the characteristics and the role of proletarian Parties and those of reformist parties.

One of the principal characteristics which distinguishes proletarian Parties from reformist parties is their revolutionary strategic perspective.

The strategy of all real proletarian Parties is to overthrow the capitalist State by armed and violent struggle. Their strategy is to build the strength of the revolutionary movement in the direct and open confrontation between the capitalists and the working class **on political ground**, the ground where the bourgeoisie's political power is directly exercised, law and justice, police, army, parliament...

Consistent with their final strategic objective, the proletarian Parties use all the forms of the struggle of the working class and the people, be they legal or defensive or directly waged against political power, to bring the proletariat and its allies to go beyond the limits of the law and of bourgeois order. By synthesizing the lessons of the struggles of the masses, they progressively bring them to constitute an **offensive** force against the bourgeoisie, and this, on all the levels where it exercises its domination, factories, law-courts, parliament, open police repression, etc...

The reformist parties on the contrary, constantly force the proletariat to remain within the limits fixed by law and bourgeois order. They don't hesitate to sermonize and to slow down the workers who go beyond the boundaries of the capitalist laws, in their struggles.

While communists understand that partial, immediate and defensive struggles are the best school for the proletariat to learn about its real political interests, and its final objective, the reformists consider that the defensive struggle is an end in itself. Their slogan is "we must be satisfied with bread crumbs from the bourgeoisie and eternally limit our demands to reforms" that is, two objectives that the capitalists are always able to recuperate in function of their own interests.

The reformist parties are consistent with their strategy which is to agree with the bourgeoisie. Their long term goal is to consolidate and to improve the capitalist system. And so they are a precious arm for the bourgeoisie, especially when it's in trouble.

Revolutionary unionism and reformist unionism

Another essential characteristic which demarcates proletarian Parties from reformist parties is their conception of union struggles.

Although communists support and participate in union struggles as essential struggles to preserve the acquired rights of the working class and to ameliorate its living and working conditions, they **differentiate this type of struggle because of its very nature as an economic struggle — from the political struggle which is the direct struggle against State power. The articulation of the economic and political struggles must be made on the basis of their distinctions.** The proletarian Party relies on union struggles to politically educate the working class and to awaken its political consciousness, by linking immediate objectives to political objectives which can be generalized to the entire class, such as the democratization in the unions, workers' solidarity, proletarian internationalism, etc.

Reformist parties, on the contrary, reduce the two struggles to the level of the defensive economic struggle. That is, they completely confuse the two types of struggles. On the union level just like on the political level, they struggle for reforms, for short term and immediate objectives and for the respect of the capitalist order. They confine political action to the parliamentary and electoral struggle and limit union struggles to peaceful negotiations and to the modification of the Labour Code. On the economic level, the irreconcilable contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat is never put into question. And thus, they maintain the illusion that elections and collective agreements are sufficient ways of obtaining a radical transformation of the capitalist system.

Social democracy in Canada

In Canada, the New Democratic Party (NDP) and the Parti Québécois (PQ) are two good examples of social democratic parties. Even though one says it's federalist and the other independentist, their political project is fundamentally the same — to consolidate and develop the tendency towards State monopoly capitalism. **That is, replan monopoly capitalism**, by making the working class and the people believe that they'll obtain a bigger piece of the pie on the economic and political levels.

Their flirt with the bourgeoisie has become so notorious that the workers, unionists and the progressives from the petty-bourgeoisie increasingly ask the question about the necessity of a new workers' party which would be "more radical and socialist". Many groups take

advantage of this favorable situation to put forward new projects.

Thus, the Communist Party of Canada, which disowned revolutionary Marxist-Leninist principles in 1952, hurries to propose a **Federated mass workers' party** to these radicalized sectors. And so, certain union permanents are actively preparing to set up a workers' party out of the unions...

But these socialist parties which are "new" in appearance, in no way differentiate themselves on the level of their strategic objectives and their fundamental political principles, from the traditional social democratic parties. They defend the utopic project of the peaceful passage to socialism, forgetting that the bourgeoisie will defend its State power to the end and that it will even resort to arms. In practice they deny the leading role of the working class by indifferently addressing all salaried workers, which amounts to the same thing as giving the leadership of their party to the petty-bourgeoisie... the class which according to their arguments is "the most numerous". In this way, they deny the existence of class struggle and of the irreducible contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the working class. Their strategy is the same as the Popular Unity's in Chile. And in September 1973, we saw where the disorganization of the proletariat, the absence of its revolutionary Party and the disarmament of the working class leads to — to a military fascist dictatorship and bloody repression.

The Marxist-Leninist movement today

At the present time, only Marxist-Leninists defend the revolutionary principles which must be the basis of the proletarian Party.

Even though they are divided and numerically weak, Marxist-Leninists are increasingly conscious of the necessity of uniting to build together the proletarian Party. But contrary to the opportunists and the social democrats, who unite without any principled basis, be they on the right or on the left, the Marxist-Leninists want to base their unity on a clear agreement of principle. They want to rally the real Marxist-Leninists who are interested in defending to the end, the interests of the working class and of the revolution. And today, to do this, they give themselves **three major tasks: to clarify their political line by criticism and self-criticism, to proletarianize their organization, and to build a single Party.** To the extent that one group today presents itself as being this Party, the "Communist" Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist), the "C"PC(M-L), they also have the duty of investigating this party and analyzing its political line. If it's proven that its identification with Marxism-Leninism is without foundation, it must be denounced. If, on the contrary, it represents the real interests of the working class, they should call on all Marxist-Leninists to rally to it.

Without the revolution there can be no liberation, without the proletarian Party, there can be no revolution

Capitalism cannot exist without the exploitation of the working class and the domination of the entire labouring mass. Eliminating capitalist exploitation and domination means eliminating capitalism itself. Eliminating capitalism means expropriating the bourgeoisie and abolishing the political form of its domination, that is, the bourgeois State and bourgeois parliamentary democracy.

But the capitalist class will never cede its power or its holdings. It will fight to its death to preserve them, and it won't hesitate, as it has already done so many times, to use all forms of violence imaginable, going from the systematic repression of the workers and the communist movement, to a world war. Hence, the absolute necessity that the workers have recourse to revolutionary violence to eliminate this class which is essentially composed of parasites.

The struggle against the capitalist class, the struggle for socialism, is a long and difficult struggle which demands that the workers have a united organization of combat, guided by a scientific theory, Marxism-Leninism, and solidly implanted among the labouring masses. This party can't be anything but a proletarian Party, that is, a Party which mainly bases its organization in the working class in order to rally to it all the strata of the people against the capitalist class.

The class basis of the proletarian Party, the leading party of the socialist revolution, is thus first of all, the proletariat, and then all the other labouring strata of the people. Because, in capitalist society the proletariat is the sworn enemy of the bourgeoisie. The riches of the capitalist class depend mainly on it. Thus it is up to the proletariat to build the movement which will sweep away the domination of capital, of its monopolies and of its State.

NB: Certain parts of this pamphlet were rectified. Please refer to the presentation at the beginning of this brochure.

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