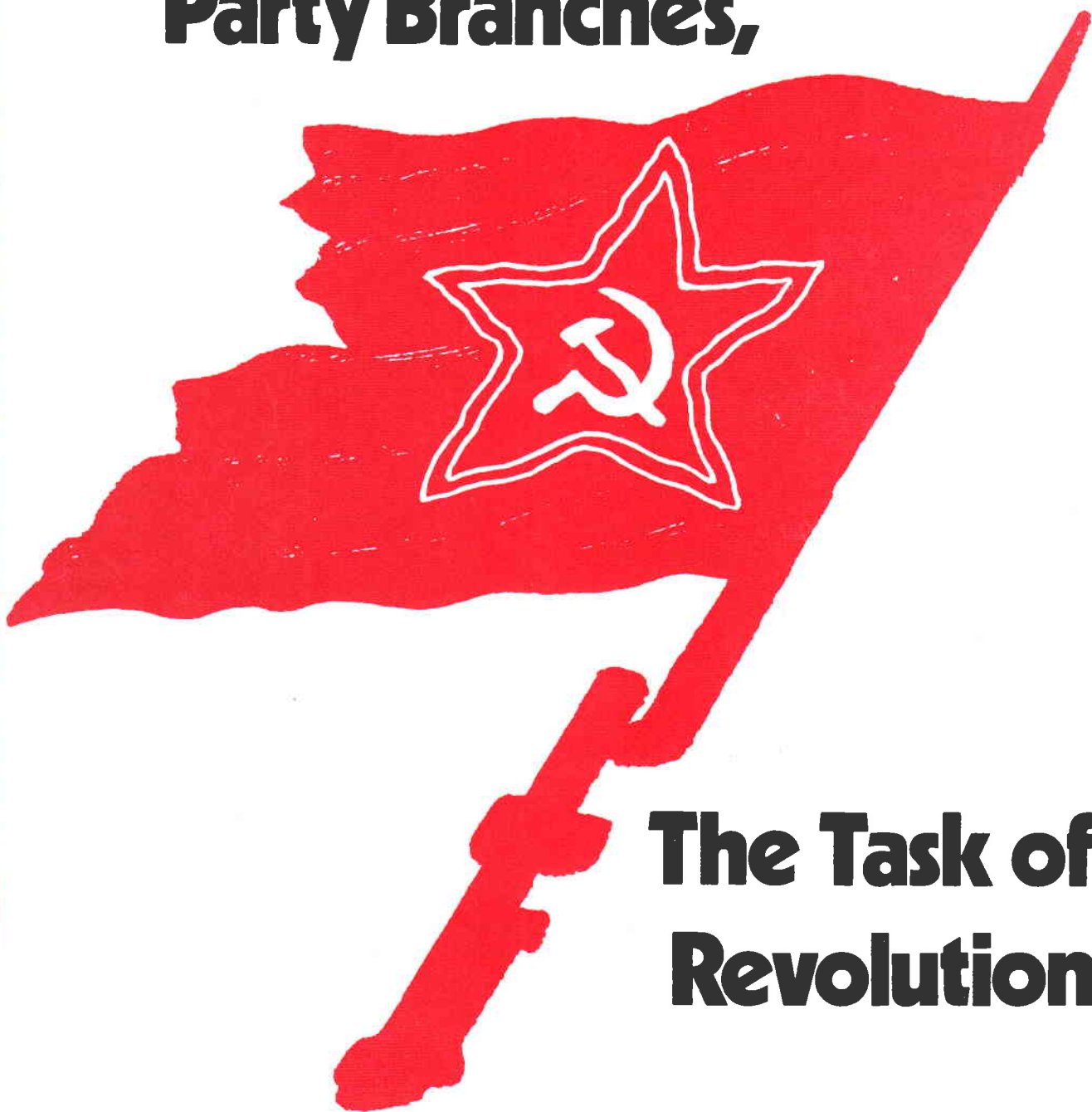


The Tasks of Party Branches,



The Task of Revolution

**by the
Revolutionary
Communist
Party, USA**

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<i>Party's Basic Organization Rooted in Making Revolution</i> August, 1977	1
<i>The Tasks of Party Branches, The Task of Revolution</i> September, 1977	6

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Party's Basic Organization Rooted in Making Revolution

The *Constitution* of the Revolutionary Communist Party states that, "Party branches shall be set up as the basic units of the Party, along the lines of the organization of production and society, in order to be most rooted in the actual struggles of the working class and the masses." Why is it that the basic organization of the Party is structured in this way and how does this relate to the overall role of the Party—to lead the working class and masses of people in overthrowing capitalism, establishing socialism and advancing to communism?

First of all, as Mao Tsetung has summarized it, "Marxists regard man's activity in production as the most fundamental practical activity," through which man not only comes to better understand the relations between himself and nature, but "also gradually comes to understand, in varying degrees, certain relations that exist between man and man." ("On Practice," *Select-ed Works*, Vol. 1, p. 295) It is in their role in production, the way they are organized in carrying out production and their relationship to the system of production, that workers have their fundamental character as a class. It is in production that the fundamental contradiction of capitalist society—between socialized production, represented by the working class and private ownership, represented by the capitalists—takes direct, concrete form. And it is the socialization of workers in production that provides the *basis* for them to develop the outlook and the organization necessary to overthrow capitalism, eliminate the contradictions characterizing the capitalist epoch and move mankind forward to a whole new stage, communism.

As the *Programme* of the RCP points out, "In their everyday life workers pour their sweat into production and, in capitalist society, experience the life-killing exploitation on which the system is built. They take part in struggles, together with fellow workers and others, against the abuses and outrages of the capitalist system." And as stated in a number of places by the Party (including the report from the Central Committee, excerpted in the June and July 1977 issues of *Revolution*) today it is in the economic struggles of the workers, the struggle against their employers

around wages, working conditions, etc., that the "center of gravity" of the Party's work must now be concentrated. This is because, to quote that CC Report, "the economic struggle is now. . . where in fact the workers, as *workers*, are waging their battles and in the embryonic way they are beginning to develop a sense of themselves as *workers* by fighting against an opposing group of employers."

Every Factory a Fortress

But in the fundamental and strategic sense the Party is not rooted in the plants and other work places mainly in order to lead the workers in waging the economic struggles, though today that is the "center of gravity" of the Party's work and at all times under capitalism this is a very important part of the class struggle. Beyond this, however, the Party must be organized along these lines in order to be able to turn every "factory into a fortress," not just, or mainly, of economic struggle but a political stronghold of the working class in waging the fight against the capitalist class on all fronts, around every major social question—whether it is war, the oppression of minority nationalities, a major strike, etc.

In order to build every "factory into a fortress" of this kind in the broadest way the working class needs not only its vanguard Party but also mass organization, uniting Party members and many other workers who are not communists, to wage struggle in the plants and industries and overall to mobilize the working class in the fight against all oppression, of the working class and other sections of the people as well. This is the great significance of the formation in the very near future of a national workers organization.

Still, without the leadership of its Party the working class cannot be mobilized to fight for its interests in the fullest and most fundamental sense. This is true in the short run, in particular battles the workers wage, but more than that it is the case that the abuses and outrages that spur the workers to battle cannot be ended, and the plunging of society into crisis, war and

massive suffering and destruction cannot be eliminated without the working class rising up and leading the masses in revolution to sweep away the cause of it all—capitalism. And as the Party's *Programme* emphasizes, "In order to become conscious of itself as a class, and to know and change the world in accordance with its revolutionary interests, the working class must have the leadership of its own political Party, a Party that takes part in and leads the battles of the working class and its allies against the capitalist rulers and consistently points the way forward toward the goal of overthrowing the rule of capital, building socialism and advancing to communism. In every country where the working class has seized and held power and continued on the socialist road, it has had the leadership of such a Party." Without such a Party it is impossible for the working class to emancipate itself from the chains of capitalist wage-slavery, and only when the working class, in every country, is led by such a Party can it move forward to finally emancipate mankind as a whole from the shackles of class society altogether.

Political Line and Organization

It is on the basis of this understanding, on the basis of recognizing not only what the fundamental contradiction of capitalism is but that it can only be resolved through socialist revolution, that the Revolutionary Communist Party builds its basic organization where the workers are concentrated in production. And it is this understanding that must guide the work of all the Party units in all work they carry out, both in building the economic struggle and in the broader sense working to turn every "factory into a fortress" in the way summarized before.

This understanding and the organizational principles that flow from it are directly and completely opposed to the reformist and revisionist organizations that claim to represent the working class, or "the people." For example, the Communist Party, USA (CP) is organized not on the lines of production, with its basic concentration in accordance with the concentration of workers in production, but along the lines of bourgeois electoral districts.

Organization flows from political line, and the reason the CP is organized in this way is that it holds and promotes the line that "socialism" can and will be achieved peacefully, through the process of elections. This, of course, is a perversion of Marxism-Leninism and of the scientific truth that it reveals: that all social revolutions, all transformations of society in which one system replaces another, are and must be achieved through the forcible overthrow and then the forcible suppression of one class by another, and that the state—the government apparatus, especially the armed forces and bureaucracies—is the instrument of one class for the suppression of another. All of history bears out this truth. This has been proven to be true even in the case of revolutions in previous eras where one exploiting class overthrew and took control of society from another—for example in the bourgeois revolutions of the past few centuries where the capitalist class cap-

tured power and replaced the feudal system with the capitalist system. Still more is this the case with socialist revolution, where the working class has the task not of overthrowing one system of exploitation for another, but of abolishing exploitation and class divisions altogether.

Clearly, then, whether to be organized on the basis of being rooted where the workers have their character as a class and their concentrated strength or on the basis of electoral districts that blur class distinctions and cover up the nature of the system and the state is a fundamental question of ideological and political line, of basic class outlook, aims and program of struggle. And it is one of the hallmarks of the CP in this country and revisionist parties in other countries that with their ideological and political degeneration came the transformation of their organization from one based in industrial concentration to one based on electoral districts or other similar forms.

This question is also a crucial one in terms of victory or defeat in the class war against the bourgeoisie. One example is the history of the Communist Party in Germany, during the late 1920s and early 1930s, a period marked by deepening crisis and mass discontent, a period characterized by great turmoil and punctuated by periodic uprisings of the masses. One of the serious weaknesses of the Communist Party of Germany during that time—though not the only one—was the fact that it lacked strong organization among the workers in basic industry and so was weakened in its ability to mobilize them as the backbone of the struggle against the ruling class and the fascist forces it increasingly promoted. And this organizational weakness, along with others, contributed to the fact that, despite the militant and massive battles it waged, the German working class was dealt a serious defeat with the German bourgeoisie's institution of the fascist form of its dictatorship under Hitler.

Preparing for Revolution

This emphasizes once again the basic principle that all of the Party's work, and the very way it is organized to carry out that work, is and must be consciously aimed at preparing its own ranks and the masses of workers (and others oppressed by the capitalist rulers) for the eventual armed onslaught to overthrow the capitalists. If the Party is not organized and does not carry out its work toward that aim, then what is the purpose of the Party itself, what is the reason for its very existence?

But what does it mean to prepare its ranks and the masses for revolution? Fundamentally it is a question of political and ideological line, of raising the class consciousness of the masses, of training them—especially the advanced—in the science of revolution so they can learn to see through the various tricks and maneuvers of the ruling class and the charlatans they use to mislead people. It is not essentially a question of putting guns in the masses' hands; in fact the bourgeoisie will do a lot of that. It is line that will determine which way people use those arms.

The recent Report from the Central Committee of the RCP drives home this point and points to the fact that unless the Party carries out its work in this way then, when the conditions for revolution do ripen the Party will be in no position to seize the opportunity and will simply throw it away, condemning the masses to prolonged suffering under capitalism. And, as stressed in that Report, in order to prepare its own ranks and the masses for revolution, the Party must wage big battles together with the masses and join with others to build mass organization. But at the same time, it must pay serious and systematic attention to building the Party itself, "both quantitatively (more members) and qualitatively (deepen its grasp of the correct line and its links with the masses)," as the Central Committee Report says.

These two aspects (quantitative and qualitative) are dialectically related. The deepening grasp of the correct line and the Party's links with the masses enable the Party to recruit more fighters into its ranks, and as the *Programme* states: "As broader and broader sections of the working class become class conscious and join the ranks of the Party, it is more and more able to fulfill its role as the vanguard of the proletariat and to apply the mass line more thoroughly."

As the CC Report also notes, Lenin characterized three conditions that mark a revolutionary situation: (1) the ruling class is unable to rule in the old way; (2) the masses are unable to live in the old way; and (3) there is a Party with the line, program and organization to lead the masses in making revolution. With the development of such a situation, and in particular as the first two conditions come into being—which, of course, is related to the Party's work among the masses in the non-revolutionary situation, in building mass struggle and raising the consciousness of the struggling masses—then the question of the Party's ability to lead the masses in seizing the opportunity becomes decisive.

If the Party has not built a strong base, ideologically, politically and organizationally among the workers, especially but not exclusively the most active and class conscious, in the basic industries where the workers are concentrated and have their character as a class, then it will be seriously crippled in its ability to lead the masses in making revolution even with the development of an objectively revolutionary situation.

This emphasizes the fact that party building has to be conducted in close connection with what today is the Party's central task, "to build the struggle, class consciousness and revolutionary unity of the working class and develop its leadership of a broad united front against the U.S. imperialists, in the context of the worldwide united front against imperialism aimed at the rulers of the two superpowers. As this is developed, together with the development of a revolutionary situation, the question of mobilizing the masses for the armed insurrection will then come to the fore as the immediate question." (*Programme*, p. 102)

At this point the Party's role in leading the masses in this task will come down over line, formulating policies to win over the broadest masses to revolutionary struggle, and over concrete questions such as

how, on the basis of that line, to organize the armed power of the working class, based on and backed by the organized strength of the workers, especially where they are most concentrated, in basic industry.

The Party's *Programme* clearly sets forth its role and responsibility in this light: "When the conditions are ripe, the Party organizes and directs the armed forces of the working class, in smashing the bourgeois state and suppressing the bourgeoisie." In this situation, with the insurrection and in the conditions of civil war, the Party must not only lead the armed struggle, but must lead the masses in carrying out other urgent tasks, such as defending the factories from capitalist attempts to destroy them once an area has been seized by the working class, finding the ways to continue or restore production and meet the needs of the people, including the supplying of the workers armed forces, and concretely exercising political power in the areas they capture.

In this situation, while mass organization will play a crucial role, success or failure will ultimately depend on the line and the organized strength of the Party. The deeper its roots among the workers, the more it is concentrated in basic, strategic industries, and most fundamentally, the more it has built the foundation for developing factories into actual fortresses of revolutionary struggle, the greater will be its ability to lead the masses in the armed conflict with the capitalists. At that time such questions will, literally, be a matter of life or death.

Transforming All Society

Looking beyond the first great step of the working class in carrying out its historical mission—the seizure of power through the armed overthrow of the capitalist class—and considering the question of transforming all of society to achieve communism, it is still more decisive that the Party be based where the workers are organized in production. For how can the differences between industry and agriculture, between workers in different industries and other contradictions be handled in accordance with the interests of the working class as a whole in advancing society, without a Party that, exactly because it is rooted in all different sectors, is able not only to forge but to carry out lines and policies representing the interests of the working class, greater than any of its particular parts and greater than any particular sector of society?

Without a Party with a correct line to synthesize, through the application of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought, the overall interests of the working class and society and concretize these into policies, the working class and masses will be split into conflicting and competing fragments and will be incapable of maintaining its rule and continuing on the socialist road. Only based on this higher synthesis can the working class develop economic plans and other ways of running and transforming society that actually correspond to the needs of the people. Without this, different sections of the working class and society would be blind to each other's needs and abilities—

separated, for example, by the walls of the objective divisions of industry and agriculture into different sections of production. And without that Party being organized among the different sectors of society, and most especially its basic productive units, it will be unable to achieve that correct synthesis, to arm the broad masses with correct lines and policies and actually lead the masses in carrying them out.

In the U.S. today such questions may seem remote and abstract, since it is not only the case that the working class does not yet hold state power but the immediate prospect of the working class seizing power does not exist—in short this is a non-revolutionary situation, in which the capitalist class, though in deepening crisis and being weakened, still has reserves and is able to maintain its rule with *relative* stability. But the point is, as stressed throughout the Report from the RCP Central Committee and in this article, that all the work of the Party now plays a decisive part in preparing the working class and its Party for the development of a revolutionary situation in the future. And it is exactly for this reason that the Party must concentrate its forces in the working class, especially in basic industry where workers are most concentrated and socialized, and must build mass struggle, mass organization and the Party itself mainly in these areas, “along the lines of the organization of production and society,” as the *Constitution* of the RCP sets down.

Work Among All Oppressed

At the same time, however, in order to carry out its role as the vanguard of the working class, the Party must not only build basic units in industry or carry out work only in the working class, but must work among all strata and groups oppressed by the capitalists. Just as Mao Tsetung says that man’s most fundamental practical activity is in production, he also emphasizes that “Man’s social practice is not confined to activity in production, but takes many other forms—class struggle, political life, scientific and artistic pursuits; in short, as a social being, man participates in all spheres of the practical life of society. Thus man, in varying degrees, comes to know the different relations between man and man, not only through his material life but also through his political and cultural life (both of which are intimately bound up with material life).” (“On Practice,” *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 296)

As it says in the *RCP Programme*: “The basic conflict in capitalist society is between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, representing socialized production on the one hand and private ownership of the means of production on the other. But this basic contradiction gives rise to other contradictions, which are mainly influenced by, but also have a significant influence on, the basic contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.” (p. 97)

Workers are concerned about and wage struggle around not only conditions where they work, but also about many other questions that affect them in every sphere of society. This does not change the fact that it is in production that workers have their basic char-

acter as a class, nor does it deny the fact that the organization of the working class and its Party must be rooted where workers are organized in production. But it does point to the need to develop the movement of the working class, as a class for itself, fighting around all the major social questions, regardless of what strata or group is most directly affected—students, oppressed minorities, etc. The point is, the working class and its Party must be organized and mobilized to take up and “infuse its strength, discipline and revolutionary outlook into every major social movement,” and that in order to do this it is crucial to root organization where the workers are concentrated as a class, turning every “factory into a fortress” of all-around struggle against the ruling class.

Along with this, the Party of the working class must build units among and lead the struggle of other sections of the people. The strategy of the working class for making revolution is the united front against the imperialist ruling class under the leadership of the working class. This can only be built if the Party of the working class, while mainly rooted in the struggles of the workers themselves, also joins with and gives leadership to the struggles of all those strata and groups that are oppressed by and fight back against the imperialist rulers. But, in addition, as V.I. Lenin wrote in *What Is To Be Done?*, “Working-class consciousness cannot be genuine political consciousness unless the workers are trained to respond to *all* cases of tyranny, oppression, violence and, no matter *what class* is affected—unless they are trained, moreover, to respond from a . . . [communist] point of view and no other. The consciousness of the working masses cannot be genuine class-consciousness, unless the workers learn, from concrete, and above all from topical, political facts and events to observe *every* other social class in *all* the manifestations of its intellectual, ethical, and political life; unless they learn to apply in practice the materialist analysis and the materialist estimate of *all* classes, strata, and groups of the population.” (*Collected Works*, Vol. 5, p. 412)

Recent experience in the U.S. has shown how the struggle of Black people and other oppressed nationalities, students and youth and other sections of the people fighting against U.S. aggression in Indochina and more recently against U.S. backing for the racist regimes in southern Africa, the fight of women for equality and other struggles have raised questions, created controversy and generated discussion and struggle among broad numbers of workers, inspiring the most advanced in particular with the desire to build struggle against the same capitalist enemy. All this has, overall, had a very positive effect on the working class.

At the same time there is confusion and backward reactions among workers in response to these struggles and there are, of course, shortcomings and limitations to these various social movements, despite their positive character overall. But this stresses all the more the need for the Party of the working class to both work among these other strata to give leadership to them, to bring forward the outlook and interests of the working class, and even more importantly to bring to the work-

ers an understanding of both the overall positive role and also the shortcomings of these struggles and the *class basis* of this. As the *Programme* of the RCP states, "Only by uniting with all social forces fighting imperialism can the working class develop consciousness of its own historical role as capitalism's gravedigger. The proletariat will learn more sharply the nature of society and the monopoly capitalists who rule it, as it sees the bourgeoisie attack not only its ranks but the other strata as well. In this way, it sees also the vacillation of the other strata toward the bourgeoisie, their narrowness and self interest. With the aid of the Party, it sums up that none of these other class forces can represent its interests, and that this stems from the fact that they have a different position in society—they own some means of production or stand above the proletariat in society's 'division of labor.' Thus the working class not only wins allies in the course of building the united front, but learns why it alone can lead them to overthrow the monopoly capitalists." (p. 103)

Once again, this emphasizes the fact that, while working among all strata oppressed by the capitalists, in all social movements, and recruiting into the Party advanced, revolutionary-minded fighters in these movements who are won to the stand of the working class, the Party must concentrate its organization and build the Party mainly among the workers, especially where their strength and character as a class is most concentrated. And, again, while building mass struggle and mass organization, the Party units must also devote systematic efforts to finding and training revolutionaries and recruiting them into the Party, to building the Party as the vanguard of the working class firmly based in the backbone of the working class along the lines that the workers are organized in production, and to strengthening its ability not only to lead the immediate battles but to prepare its own ranks and the masses to carry revolutionary struggle through to victory when the conditions for revolution ripen. ■

The Tasks of Party Branches, The Task of Revolution

Article 12 of the *Constitution* of the Revolutionary Communist Party sets forth a most important part of the Party's basic line, summarizing in five points the main tasks of Party branches as the basic units of the Party. What is the significance of these tasks and how do they relate to the fundamental goal of socialist revolution and the eventual realization of communism? Why is it that unless the Party branches act on the basis of these principles the Party cannot fulfill its role as the advanced detachment of the working class?

The first point is that the Party branches must "give constant education to the Party members and supporters concerning the ideological and political line and lead them, together with the proletariat and broad masses, in fighting resolutely against the class enemy." (*Programme and Constitution of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA*, pp. 172-3) Why is this task given such emphasis, why is the question of constant education in the line of the Party given priority in the way that it is here? The decisive point is that education in the Party's line is the *basis* for leading the working class (proletariat) and broad masses in struggle against the bourgeoisie (class enemy). And unless the struggle of the working class and broad masses is led by a correct line, the line of the Party of the working class, then their struggle cannot continue to advance and there is no way it can achieve the final goal of overthrowing and eventually eliminating the capitalist class.

This does not mean that the masses of people can never wage militant struggle against the enemy unless the Party is leading them, that all spontaneous struggle is of no value and cannot lead to progress. Of course such struggle breaks out all the time, does often strike powerful blows against the enemy, and certainly can and does continually contribute to the development of revolutionary mass movements that advance the cause of the working class. The point is that without the leadership of the Party, without the guidance of its ideological and political line representing the revolutionary outlook and interests of the working class, there is no way that mass struggle can continue to advance through ups and downs, no way the struggling masses can thoroughly distinguish real friends from real enemies and build the broadest unity against the enemy, and certainly no way the struggle can be carried forward to achieve the historic mission of the working class, the abolition of class society. Without this leadership, it is certain that the capitalists and their agents will sooner or later succeed in their attempts to misdirect, attack, split and defeat struggles and mass movements, they will succeed in maintaining their rule, even in restoring capitalist rule where it has been over-

thrown, and in prolonging the capitalist system with all the evils that flow from it.

Throughout the history of this country, as in every country, the working class and others oppressed by the ruling class have waged militant and heroic battles against their oppressors and tormentors. And this remains true today. But what is required is that, through all the twists and turns of the mass movement, the Party of the working class unites with and gives leadership to the masses in struggle. And giving leadership does not only mean giving tactical guidance in the immediate battle—that is an important task of the Party but not the most important, not the main role the Party must play.

Its overall leading role consists in guiding the masses, first and foremost the masses of workers, through every battle toward the goal of socialist revolution, revealing the class nature of the enemy and of the different forces involved in the struggle, showing in a living way how the source of the outrages the masses are fighting against is the capitalist system, enabling the masses to learn through their own experience the necessity and inevitability of socialist revolution and preparing the masses as well as the Party itself to make revolution when the objective conditions ripen.

Lessons of Old CP

In this regard, as the *Programme* of the Revolutionary Communist Party points out, there are valuable lessons to be drawn from the experience of the Communist Party (CP), "both the positive lessons of the leadership given by the Communist Party to the mass struggle, and the negative lessons of the CP's errors which made possible its transformation into a counter-revolutionary organization." (pp. 64-65) The RCP *Programme* takes note of the fact that the CP provided many of the most dedicated and capable organizers and practical leaders in the great unionizing drives of the 1930s, in the fight against lynching and other acts of terror and oppression of the Black people, and in other mass struggles. The CP did some good work in spreading revolutionary ideas, in raising class consciousness and in building the Party itself. But, as the *Programme* stresses, in the course of the fight for industrial unions and in general, the CP "increasingly lost sight of the final aim of socialist revolution." (p. 104)

At the very time "as the CP grew in strength and influence," during the 1930s, it "fell into pragmatism, an American ruling class philosophy which says, 'It is not really possible to know the laws that govern nature and society; if something seems to work, never mind the

reasons, do it.' This leads straight to revisionism which proclaims, 'The movement is everything, the final aim nothing.' " (RCP *Programme*, p. 68) And, although this line was struggled against within the CP, this was done in a "scattershot way," against particular revisionist policies, and the roots of revisionism were never thoroughly struck at (see *Programme*, p. 70).

Finally, in the mid-'50s, the revisionist line was completely consolidated in the CP, and it became another knife in the back of the working class instead of the most important weapon of the working class as it had once been. As our Party's *Programme* also sums up, "Much of this was due to the downplaying of political education . . . CPUSA members were not trained in Marxism-Leninism, or in the spirit of constant struggle within the Party to determine the real situation and the road ahead." (pp. 69-70)

From all this the importance of the tasks of the Party branches, as set forth in the *Constitution* of the RCP, stands out all the more sharply. And it is even clearer why it is crucial to "give constant education to the Party members and supporters concerning the ideological and political line . . ."

Lifeline of Party Branch

If such constant education in the line is not carried out then there is no way Party members and supporters can give the kind of leadership to the mass struggle sum-

marized earlier, the kind of leadership that is essential for the mass movement to continue to advance and for the working class to develop its struggle into a revolutionary force at the head of the broadest masses. Constant education in the ideological and political line is the lifeline of the Party branch, it is decisive in enabling the branches and their members—and ultimately the Party as a whole—to play their vanguard role.

Is this task, as formulated in the *Constitution*, promoting theory as principal over practice and reversing the correct relationship between the two? No, not at all. The ideological and political line of the Party is developed by grasping the universal principles of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought, the science of revolution, and applying them to the concretes of class struggle. This science is rooted in practice—not, however, just narrow and immediate practice, but the practice of mankind historically and internationally in three great struggles—class struggle, the struggle for production and scientific experimentation. Further, the Party's line is developed by the *Party as a whole*, through its organized structure, with its leading bodies responsible for synthesizing at the highest level, through the application of this revolutionary science, the experience accumulated by the Party and the masses in struggle.

Though they definitely can and must contribute to this process, the branches themselves do not and cannot develop the overall line, or else each branch would, on the basis of its limited experience, develop its own line and there would not be one line but many lines, not one center but many centers—and therefore no real center at all—in the Party. Then the Party would be based not on Marxism but empiricism—taking partial experience for universal truth—and would be bogged down in revisionist politics and factionalism in organizational affairs. Of course the fact that only the Party's leading bodies can develop its overall line and policies in no way lessens the responsibility of the Party branches to develop specific policies for advancing the struggle in their areas of work. This involves the branches grasping the dialectical movement from practice to theory and back to practice on a higher level. But in order for this task to be carried out correctly the branches must carry out education in the general line of the Party and develop specific policies in accordance with the general line.

The line of the Party is, of course, not a static thing but is constantly developed by the Party as a whole through the process of applying Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought—the summation of practice in the way stressed before—to practice and on this basis accumulating more experience, which must in turn be summed up by the whole Party to deepen the line and develop its further application—and on and on in an endless upward spiral. But at any point for each of the Party branches constant education in the ideological and political line of the Party is decisive. It enables Party members (and supporters) to take part in struggles with the overall picture and the long-term goal in mind and to avoid tailing after spontaneity in the mass movements, which would amount to abandoning such movements to bourgeois lines and leadership and ultimately abandoning the masses to the "mercy" of the bourgeoisie.

Constitution of the RCP, USA

Article 12

The main tasks of the Party branches are:

1. To give constant education to the Party members and supporters concerning the ideological and political line and lead them, together with the proletariat and broad masses, in fighting resolutely against the class enemy;
2. To maintain close ties with the masses, constantly listen to their opinions and demands and wage an active ideological struggle so as to keep Party life vigorous;
3. To propagate and carry out the policies of the Party, implement its decisions and fulfill every task assigned by the Party;
4. To lead the Party members and supporters in studying Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought conscientiously and thoroughly opposing revisionism and all forms of opportunism;
5. To take in new Party members, enforce Party discipline and constantly consolidate the Party organizations, getting rid of the stale and taking in the fresh, so as to constantly strengthen the proletarian character of the Party and its role as the vanguard of the working class.

Without such constant education it is impossible to correctly apply the mass line—to take the scattered and partial experiences and ideas of the masses and concentrate what is correct, while struggling against what is incorrect, in order to continually arm the masses with a deeper understanding of their actual interests and enable them to fight more effectively for those interests, in terms of the immediate battle and most importantly in terms of the long-term struggle for socialism and ultimately communism.

If education in the ideological and political line is reduced to discussion of only those parts of the line that seem to have the most direct relevance to the immediate battle, or if education in the Party's line is taken up only case by case in the course of particular battles, then the line is reduced to a series of tactics, divorced from the overall aims and strategy which alone form the basis for developing correct tactics that can continue to advance the struggle. Once again, if this approach is taken as the guiding principle then the Party and its basic units will be based not in Marxism but empiricism, not on revolutionary but revisionist politics, and the unity of will and action of the Party, based on and guided by its overall line, will be replaced with narrow "departmentalism," even factionalism, in organizational affairs.

What does it mean, then, to give constant education in the ideological and political line, and how do the branches carry this out in relation to the requirements of leading mass struggle? It means that every branch and all its members must systematically study and discuss major documents of the Party—the *Programme and Constitution* and other major documents, major articles in the Party press, etc.—not "all at once" but in accordance with the guidance given by the higher bodies of the Party. This must focus on the following points: What are the most important questions of line in the material to be studied and discussed and how do they relate to the overall line of the Party? How do the main points made and the tasks set forth in any particular material relate to the general and long-term objectives and the basic strategy, the united front led by the working class and its Party, as well as to other tasks and objectives set by the Party for the present period? How can the line set forth be applied concretely to the conditions the branches and their members face in their work, while keeping in mind the overall picture and the long-term goal? In addition Party branches must take initiative to study and discuss particular documents, or parts of them, on the basis of the needs of the branch in deepening its ability to grasp and apply the Party's line on major points as well as in relation to specific questions and problems arising in the work of the branches and their members.

Giving constant education to Party supporters as well as members concerning the ideological and political line also means making use of the Party press among Party supporters who are not yet members—not only regularly distributing the Party press to them (as well as more broadly among the masses) but also systematically discussing with them major articles. Further it means taking up important questions of line with them, not only individually but in group discussions, through Party forums on different questions and in other ways. It means,

in particular, arming advanced workers (and others) who are close to the Party and are potential Party members with a deeper understanding of the Party's line and how to apply it, using the same basic points that are used in Party branches (the questions outlined above) as guidelines for discussion around articles and other Party publications of various kinds. And it means educating them in the role and importance of the Party itself, of building the Party and why they should join it.

In carrying out this task, both among Party members and supporters, Party branches must keep firmly in mind the principle that was stated in the article on Party organization in last month's *Revolution* (August 1977): "all of the Party's work and the very way it is organized to carry out that work, is and must be consciously aimed at preparing its own ranks and the masses of workers (and others oppressed by the capitalist rulers) for the eventual armed onslaught to overthrow the capitalists." Education in the Party's ideological and political line must be rooted in this understanding.

Giving education in ideological and political line and leading mass struggle on this basis, according to the principles summarized so far, will mean that the branches and their members will be able to carry out their work in a more concentrated and systematic way. The more correctly this is done the more the branches and their members will be able to distinguish major questions from minor ones, principal tasks from secondary ones; the more they will have a sense of correct priorities and the relationship of different things and the better they can achieve both collectivity and individual initiative and proper division of labor; the more effectively they can act as communist leaders of the working class and the less they will be caught up in pragmatism and "running around like chickens with their heads cut off."

But this first task of the Party branches cannot be separated from the other tasks of the branches, as set forth in the Party *Constitution*. All of these tasks are interrelated and all must be carried out in order for the branches—and ultimately the whole Party—to fulfill their role.

Close Ties with Masses

Article 12 of the RCP *Constitution* also states (in point two) that Party branches must "maintain close ties with the masses, constantly listen to their opinions and demands and wage an active ideological struggle so as to keep Party life vigorous." (p. 173) This is a basic requirement for applying the mass line and for carrying out the work of the Party in general. But, as indicated earlier, having close ties with the masses and listening to their opinions and demands is only half of the process of applying the mass line and will be perverted into tailing after the masses unless the other part of the process is also carried out—using Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tse-tung Thought to concentrate the opinions and demands of the masses and to arm them with a correct understanding of their interests and how to fight for them. To do this correctly requires learning from the masses, yes, but also waging comradely but vigorous struggle with fellow workers (and others) over what is right and wrong, since

their spontaneous understanding is naturally heavily influenced by the bourgeoisie and its agents; it requires taking a firm stand on principles and seeking unity around the actual interests of the masses, not bowing to backward ideas that exist and may temporarily have considerable sway among the masses.

Maintaining close ties with the masses means being a friend among the masses, but fundamentally it means maintaining *political* ties, and such ties can only be established, maintained and deepened by carrying out all the tasks of the Party branches. If, for example, the branches and their members do not "propagate and carry out the policies of the Party, implement its decisions and fulfill every task assigned by the Party" (point three in the tasks of the branches), then there is no way they can maintain close ties with the masses, for they will be unable to consistently lead the masses in fighting against the attacks from the enemy and will be unable to point the way forward to the resolution of the contradictions that the masses are confronted with, living in capitalist society (or socialist society). And the same is true if the branches fail to carry out their other tasks—fail to study Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought and oppose revisionism and opportunism of all kinds; fail to take in new members and build the Party ideologically, politically and organizationally; and fail to give constant education in the ideological and political line to Party members and supporters and lead them, together with the proletariat and broad masses, in the fight against the class enemy.

If the Party branches and their members are carrying out all their tasks, if they are conducting "strictly Marxist propaganda and agitation" in a living way and applying the mass line correctly, then Party life is bound to be vigorous (as called for in point two of the tasks of the Party branches). In these circumstances the branches and their members will see the necessity and be better able to "wage an active ideological struggle," because otherwise it will be impossible to concentrate the opinions and demands of the masses and maintain close ties with them, impossible to provide answers to the questions and problems that the masses raise in response to the work of Party members and that confront the masses and Party members in waging the fight against the class enemy and in advancing it toward its final goal.

On the other hand, of course, if the branches and their members do not strive to carry out their tasks, if they do not grasp the decisive role of line in the fullest sense, if they approach struggles as ends in themselves and reduce their role to mere "tacticians," divorcing the struggle from the goal of socialist revolution—in short if their work is reformist and not revolutionary—then there is no way that they can "wage an active ideological struggle" and "keep Party life vigorous." Instead branches will be bogged down in minor matters and swamped in discussion of scattered "tactical details" of many different events with no unifying direction and purpose, and liberalism, petty sectarian squabbling and subjectivism will characterize the life of the branch.

All of this touches on the basic question: what is the role of a communist in relation to the movement of the working class and the overall struggle against the re-

actionary ruling class? In *What Is To Be Done?* V. 1. Lenin gave a very vivid answer to this question, which though it took into account the particularities of the struggle in Russia at that time (1902) has universal application.

Tribune of the People

The communist ideal, he wrote, should not be the trade-union secretary, but the *tribune of the people*, who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it appears, no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects; who is able to generalize all these manifestations and produce a single picture of police violence and capitalist exploitation; who is able to take advantage of every event, however small, in order to set forth *before all* his socialist convictions and his democratic demands, in order to clarify for *all* and everyone the world-historic significance of the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat." (Chapter 3, Part E, emphasis Lenin's)

And in speaking to this same question, Lenin noted that "In the committees and study circles, one can meet people who are immersed in the study even of some special branch of the metal industry; but one can hardly ever find members of organizations (obliged, as often happens, for some reason or other to give up practical work) who are especially engaged in gathering material on some pressing question of social and political life in our country which could serve as a means for conducting Social-Democratic [communist] work among other strata of the population." (Chapter 3, Part E) Again, while Lenin was speaking to the specific conditions in Russia at that time, his comments have great relevance for the struggle and the work of the Party in the U.S. today.

This is not to say that it is unimportant to lead the economic struggles of the workers and to know the conditions workers in various industries face. It is correct to give proper weight to the economic struggle of the workers and to concentrate our Party's work in this struggle at the present time. In fact we have to do a still better job in doing communist work in such struggles—in utilizing the sparks of consciousness that arise there to develop further understanding and struggle toward the goal of proletarian revolution. But it is certainly not correct to act as merely a trade union militant in these struggles and still less to fail to carry out the work of doing all-around exposure of the bourgeoisie and the capitalist-imperialist system in connection with every significant social question regardless of which class or stratum is most directly affected.

It is correct to acquire knowledge of the different industries and of different companies, branches, etc., in a given industry, and to make use of this knowledge in carrying out the trade union struggle. But it is certainly not correct to make such considerations the *basis* for tactics, to hinge the struggle—even economic—of the workers on the ups and downs of a particular company or industry and still less to place the acquiring of such knowledge above the task of studying the major questions and events in society and the class interests involved and using *this* knowledge to educate the workers to

their general and long-term interests and mobilize them in struggle in their own class interests around these questions.

Study of Theory and Party's Line

Of course there is not only the question of wanting to act as a "tribune of the people," and to carry out "strictly Marxist propaganda and agitation." There is also the question of knowing *how* to do this. This is one of the main reasons why the RCP *Constitution* sets down the task of the branches to give constant education in the ideological and political line and also to "lead the Party members and supporters in studying Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought conscientiously and thoroughly opposing revisionism and all forms of opportunism." (Point four, Article 12) Without education in the Party's line and without the study of the science of revolution it is impossible for Party branches and their members to carry out communist work among the masses.

On the other hand it is incorrect to develop a mechanical, metaphysical approach to this question—an erroneous view that first it is necessary to understand the Party's line and master theory completely, to understand the correct line in opposition to the incorrect line in every aspect, before it is possible to do Marxist propaganda and agitation among the masses. This treats Marxism and the correct line as absolutes, as "perfect knowledge," something static which does not develop together with the development of society, of the struggle and the work of the Party, something which can be mastered "all at once." Such a view in fact reverses the correct relationship between practice and theory.

Comrades who have joined the Party and Party supporters who have taken up the study of its line have a basic understanding of the universal principles of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought and their application in the U.S. today. With the guidance of the Party overall and the Party branches in particular they can take this basic understanding and apply it to the various questions that arise throughout society and can engage in ideological struggle in a down-to-earth living way with their fellow workers and others, while uniting with them in practical struggle against the enemy.

In response to this the masses are bound to raise questions and objections that are difficult to answer or to answer deeply. This is a good thing, not a bad thing. These questions can and must be taken back to the Party and into the Party branches, where through collective study, discussion and struggle the understanding of all those involved will be raised. And this higher level of understanding can in turn be taken back to the masses, which will give rise to new questions . . . and so on, in a continuous upward spiral.

All this contributes greatly to vigorous, healthy ideological struggle within the Party and to raising the consciousness of the masses broadly. It is in accordance with the correct understanding of how in fact knowledge develops, and this, too, can and should be explained to the masses.

The correct understanding of how knowledge devel-

ops and the relationship between practice and theory is also directly related to point three of the tasks of the Party branches as set forth in Article 12 of the RCP *Constitution*: "To propagate and carry out the policies of the Party, implement its decisions and fulfill every task assigned by the Party." (p. 173) The Party operates according to the principles of democratic centralism, which as the Party's *Programme* states, "combine centralized leadership and the greatest degree of discipline with the fullest discussion and struggle over policy within the organization and the selection and supervision of Party leaders by the Party membership. They make possible the unity of will and unity of action of the Party." (pp. 60-61)

Lines and policies of the Party are developed by its leadership bodies by concentrating the opinions and demands of the masses of people and the experience of the masses and of the Party as a whole in struggle. The Party branches, as the basic units of the Party, are most closely linked with the masses, most directly involved in their struggles and most closely in touch with their actual opinions and demands. But, as stressed earlier, the Party branches themselves are not in a position to fully concentrate this knowledge; it is the Party leadership which, through the application of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought, is most able to synthesize the correct line and develop correct policies. The branches and the entire Party, through its organized structure, play a very important role in this, by concentrating knowledge to the greatest degree possible through the application of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought and "passing this up" to higher levels to be part of the overall material that the Party leadership ultimately synthesizes.

Once lines and policies have been set by the Party leadership then the lower levels, including the branches as the basic units, must unite to carry them out, while applying Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought to carry them out in the most correct way in accordance with the actual conditions they face in their work and with the overall situation in mind. But if the entire Party does not unite to carry out these lines and policies then the Party cannot achieve unity of action, or unity of will, it cannot act as a solid fist, it cannot play its role as the organized force that "concentrates the organization and discipline of the working class itself, and steels it with an iron will in the struggle against capitalism." (Party *Programme*, p. 61)

Further, if the entire Party does not unite to carry out the lines and policies of the Party, then there is no way to test their correctness in practice. There is no way to sum up the experience gained in carrying them out, build on what is correct and change what is incorrect or what no longer applies because conditions have changed. Just as the entire Party, through its organized structure from the basic units on up, is involved in the formulation of its lines and policies, so the entire Party, through its organized structure down to its basic units, must carry out these lines and policies, accumulate new experience and once again develop and deepen lines and policies . . . and on and on in an endless upward spiral.

As stressed earlier, education in the Party's line is de-

cisive in enabling the Party organizationally to carry out its tasks in leading the class struggle forward, and if this education is not carried out and pragmatism reigns, it will lead to a breakdown of Party discipline whether anyone desires it or not.

Struggle Between Two Lines

Of course it is possible that lines or policies adopted by the leadership of the Party may be incorrect. If members of the Party find themselves in opposition to these lines or policies it is their duty, while upholding Party discipline and carrying out the line and policies of the Party, to raise their disagreement and criticism through the channels provided in the Party *Constitution* and to wage struggle over these in the appropriate time and place according to the organizational principles of the Party.

The fact that the Party may adopt incorrect lines and policies and the possibility that the overall line and programme of the Party may become opportunist, may change from representing the proletariat to representing the bourgeoisie, is one of the most important reasons why the Party *Constitution* sets forth as a main task of the Party branches (point four, Article 12) to conscientiously study Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought and thoroughly oppose revisionism and all forms of opportunism. The only way that the correct line can be maintained in the Party and revisionism and other forms of opportunism defeated is for the entire Party, and ever broader sections of the masses, to grasp and apply Marxism in opposition to opportunism. The discipline of the Party does not and cannot stand above its line; in fact the unity of will and unity of action of the Party ultimately depend on its overall correct line. And for Party branches and the membership of the Party as a whole there is not only the question of studying and discussing the line of the Party at any time but also of studying the basic principles of Marxism and waging struggle against all forms of opportunism—not only more obvious forms and those which have already been exposed but also opportunism which disguises itself in new forms or appears under new conditions—in order to be able to distinguish the correct from the incorrect line at all times and ensure that the Party's line and policies continue to develop in a correct direction and reflect the revolutionary outlook and interests of the working class.

The correct line can only be grasped in opposition to incorrect lines and can only develop in struggle against incorrect lines. This is why it is essential for the Party to carry out polemics against opportunist lines and to wage thoroughgoing struggle against the bourgeoisie and its agents of all kinds, including within the ranks of the working class and the revolutionary movement, not only in the practical sphere but in the theoretical and ideological sphere as well. This is also another important reason why the Party's *Constitution* stresses study of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought and opposition to revisionism and all forms of opportunism as a main task of the Party branches.

The more deeply the Party branches, as the basic units

of the Party, grasp the correct line, through comparison, contrast and struggle with incorrect and opportunist lines, the more effectively they will be able to carry out the lines and policies of the Party and arm the masses with them to "transform the world through class struggle." (Party *Programme*, p. 60) The more that there is lively struggle within the Party over its line and specific policies, the deeper and firmer will be the unity that is achieved around the correct line and the more firmly and powerfully will the whole Party unite to carry it out.

All this, of course, does not contradict what was said earlier, that Party branches and members must propagate and carry out the policies of the Party and uphold Party discipline even if they disagree with a particular line or policy. So long as the overall line of the Party is correct it is absolutely incorrect for any member or unit of the Party to refuse to carry out lines and policies or to fail to carry them out vigorously and thoroughly. Only if the overall line of the Party has become a consolidated opportunist line is it correct for communists to refuse to uphold Party discipline and to carry out the line and policies of the Party—and in those circumstances it is the duty of communists to struggle resolutely against the Party's line. But as stressed before, upholding Marxism in opposition to opportunism is a vital task not only in the extreme circumstances of the line of the Party becoming opportunist—it is the constant duty of the entire Party to study Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought and wage a thorough struggle against all forms of opportunism in order to ensure that the Party's line continues to be a revolutionary line representing the working class in the struggle to achieve its historic mission of communism.

Building the Party

Armed with a correct ideological and political line, the Party is the most powerful weapon of the working class, the organized force that leads it through all the twists and turns in the struggle and enables it to concentrate the strength of the masses to defeat the class enemy and advance to the abolition of all forms of exploitation and oppression and all class distinctions, to emancipate itself and all mankind. This is why building the Party is an extremely important part of building the revolutionary movement of the working class at all stages of the class struggle against the bourgeoisie. It is for this reason that the *Constitution* of the Revolutionary Communist Party states that one of the main tasks of the Party branches (point five, Article 12) is "To take in new Party members, enforce Party discipline and constantly consolidate the Party organizations, getting rid of the stale and taking in the fresh, so as to constantly strengthen the proletarian character of the Party and its role as the vanguard of the working class." (p. 173)

Consolidating the Party organizations and strengthening the Party's proletarian character and role as the vanguard of the working class is first of all a question of ideological and political line. The Party always puts emphasis on quality in recruiting new members and building the Party, putting quantity second. In other words, it is primarily a question of recruiting into the

Party "the most dedicated, self-sacrificing, far-seeing fighters" from the working class and other sections of the people, those who have taken up the stand and outlook of the working class and who "dedicate their entire life to building the revolutionary struggle," and "put the interests of the revolution, of the working class, above everything else." (Party *Programme*, p. 61) This is important not only in general, but especially in this period, in line with what was stressed in the recent report from the RCP Central Committee (see *Revolution*, June 1977). This report quotes Lenin who said it is of the greatest importance "to keep the revolutionary consciousness of the proletariat tense and train its best elements, not only in a general way, but concretely, so that when the popular ferment reaches the highest pitch, they will put themselves at the head of the revolutionary army."

With these points in mind, the Party branches must pay consistent attention to finding and training revolutionaries, especially those people who come to the fore in mass struggle, particularly within the working class itself but also among other sections of the people, keeping in mind the requirement that "Party members, from all classes, but especially those from outside the working class, must transform themselves in the course of class struggle, discarding ideas and practices which are alien to the working class and taking up wholeheartedly the revolutionary outlook of the working class." (Party *Programme*, p. 61)

On the other hand, this should not be taken to mean that before someone can join the Party they have to have a "perfect" understanding of Marxism and the line of the Party or be "pure proletarian" in their outlook, free of all traces of bourgeois thinking. In the real world there are no such people, either inside or outside the Party, and as emphasized before, there is no such thing as "perfect knowledge"—Marxism is a living science which must be developed in the course of applying it to the struggle to transform society (and nature).

People, especially those who come to the fore in mass struggle, particularly of the working class itself, should be recruited into the Party if they have a basic grasp of the Party's line, have a determination to master Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought and apply it to concrete struggle, and meet the basic requirements for Party membership as spelled out in the Party's *Constitution*: "Any worker or any other person involved in the revolutionary struggle who accepts the Constitution and line of the Party, is committed to working actively in a Party organization, to carrying out the Party's decisions and to observing Party discipline and paying Party membership dues, may become a member of the Revolutionary Communist Party of the USA." (pp. 167-8)

With this standard the Party can and must draw in as many members as possible at every point in the development of the struggle. Party branches, as the basic units of the Party, must, in accordance with the main tasks set for them in the Party's *Constitution*, bend every effort to recruit new members and build the Party quantitatively while giving first place to quality. For, as pointed out in the article on Party organization in last month's *Revolution* (August 1977), there is a dialectical

relationship between quality and quantity in building the Party: "The deepening grasp of the correct line and the Party's links with the masses enable the Party to recruit more fighters into its ranks and as the *Programme* states: 'As broader and broader sections of the working class become class conscious and join the ranks of the Party, it is more and more able to fulfill its role as the vanguard of the proletariat and to apply the mass line more thoroughly.'" (See *Programme*, p. 61.)

Stale and Fresh

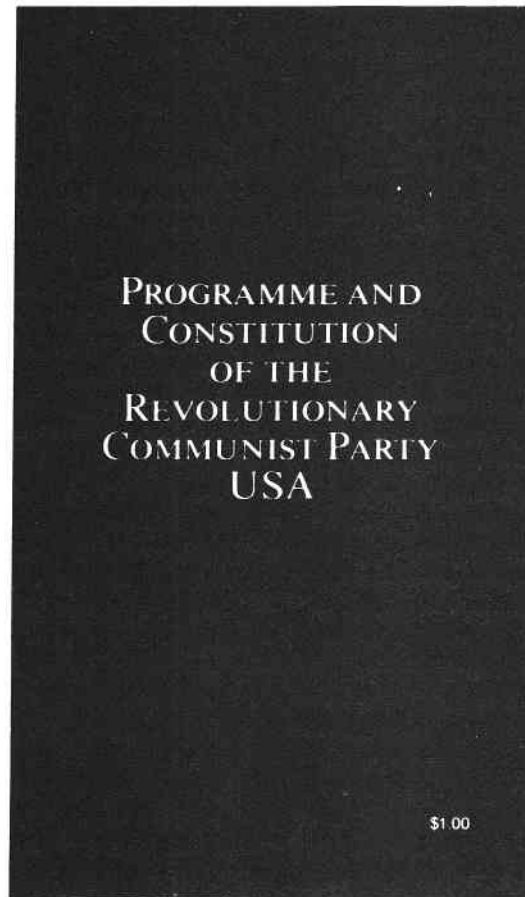
"Getting rid of the stale and taking in the fresh," as called for in the Party *Constitution* (point five, Article 12 on the main tasks of the Party branches) is also primarily a question of quality and only secondarily a question of quantity. In line with this it is primarily a question of ideological and political line and only secondarily an organizational question. In other words, "getting rid of the stale and taking in the fresh" means first of all and mainly deepening the correct line of the Party, "taking in" new ideas and understanding on the basis of applying the Party's line and summing up the class struggle and "getting rid" of ideas and policies which do not conform to the actual needs and interests of the working class or no longer apply because of new conditions. It means strengthening the proletarian stand and outlook of the Party and struggling against and discarding bourgeois and petty bourgeois baggage in close connection with leading mass struggle.

If this is done correctly then the organizational aspect can also be handled correctly. In this regard, "getting rid of the stale and taking in the fresh" means removing non-communists and anti-communists from the Party and recruiting proletarian revolutionaries into the Party. As for the "stale" forces, they are of two kinds: "Proven opportunists, enemy agents, degenerates and anti-working class elements," on the one hand and on the other, those whose revolutionary will has degenerated but who are not enemies of the working class and its Party.

The first "must be cleared out of the Party and must not be readmitted." But, as for the second category, the policy of the Party is to struggle to win them back to the revolutionary road and enable them to continue to make their fullest contribution to the revolutionary cause of the working class as a member of the Party. This is why only "after serious struggle to rekindle his revolutionary spirit" has failed should such a person "be persuaded to withdraw from the Party." (See pp. 169-70) But here, again, the Party puts priority on quality, making quantity secondary, and in this way as a crucial task builds the Party deeply and broadly in the working class, continually strengthening its ties with the masses on the basis of the correct line and recruiting new forces into the Party, especially those who come to the fore in the movement of the working class itself.

As the basic units of the Party, the Party branches are its most direct links with the masses. It is the branches which most enable the Party to learn the felt needs, the opinions and demands of the masses, the "raw material" for its correct line and policies and the starting point for

its application of the mass line; and it is the branches that have the most direct possibility and responsibility to propagate and carry out the lines and policies of the Party and lead the masses to carry forward the revolutionary struggle to the final goal. This is the fundamental reason why the Party branches, under the unified line and centralized leadership of the Party, must consistently strive to fulfill all their basic tasks as set forth in the Party Constitution. ■



The Programme of the RCP summarizes the present situation facing the working class in its struggle and points the road forward. It is a concentration of the Party's basic aims, strategy and tasks as the Party of the working class. It sets forth to the working class the goal of its struggle—revolution, socialism and ultimately communism—and the means to achieve this historic goal. It is a guide to action.

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