

Farmworkers in Salinas, California read the Revolutionary Worker. In many areas of the country, the RW is developing beginning but significant ties among the masses of people. Below is an inspiring account of one such area.



RW—An Organizer for Revolution

NETWORK OF STRUGGLE

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

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

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

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

And the Revolutionary Communist party, its members and supporters in this town did not know him either. They did not know he existed and more significantly, until three months ago, they did not know that a significant community of Chicanos and Latinos existed in their area. Today this has changed, and much of that community

is now crackling with struggle over the *Revolutionary Worker*. And this worker became one of a number to come forward around this paper and take it into their own hands so that together with millions they can "liberate themselves from the oppression" of this system of capitalism.

In an interview with the *Revolutionary Worker* recently, a group of these workers spoke about how they saw the *Revolutionary Worker*—why they first came to take it up. "In my opinion this newspaper is the only means we have at this point to bring these ideas to the people, like how we are going to make this revolution. And on the other hand, right now it is helping us also with our fund drive, in being able to collect the million dollars we are working for. Today this newspaper is the weapon that we have because we are preparing ourselves mentally, with understanding, and every day is a day to begin doing more. And this is our principal weapon, the newspaper."

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

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

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

Making Contact

One Sunday afternoon 2 or 3 weeks after the first weekly issue a large group of people went out in the neighborhood with it. Taking turns on bullhorns, knocking on every door, they went down every street, alley, and into apartment complexes and buildings. Going down one street they ran into a couple walking home from the grocery store. "We're from the *Revolutionary Worker*." "No hablamos inglés," was the answer.

A couple of the revolutionaries with the paper who had some knowledge of Spanish stepped forward. They flipped the paper over to the Spanish edition, *El Obrero Revolucionario*, and as they tried to communicate what this newspaper stood for, paper and money changed hands. The first *El Obrero Revolucionario* had been sold in the city. And the revolutionaries were told, "Come down to our street. There's an apartment building there that no one but a dog should live in—and it is full of Mexicanos."

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

Many came forward to discuss and struggle around the question of communists coming into the community with such a paper. Among them several told the *Revolutionary Worker*, "I know another apartment building where only Chicanos live." "Don't you know the neighborhood on the northside of town. It is full of Latinos and

Chicanos." "What about the restaurants in that part of town. Hundreds of people who work in there speak only Spanish. Take the paper there." "I work in a factory where there are thirty Latinos. Can you sell the paper there?"

As the *Revolutionary Worker* penetrated into the heart of some of these areas, people spoke hesitantly, then with more boldness and anger about their conditions. "In Mexico they tell you the United States is heaven itself," one young Mexican worker told us, "and then you come and you find out how you will live. There is no work. Prices are high and everything's getting worse. It isn't heaven—it is more of the same thing—capitalism."

Another young worker said he had worked all over the country—the fields of California, sugar cane in Florida, factories in Colorado and in Texas. Most others had come more recently. This community had swelled from a few thousand to many tens of thousands in less than ten years. Many had no "legal" right to be here, in this "land of opportunity," where they were living in some cases 7, 8 or more in a small apartment without furniture or any modern conveniences.

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

As soon as people from the *Revolutionary Worker* went back out and began to talk with these people, it became clear that there existed here a great reservoir of hatred for this system and the way it forces the masses to live. It also became clear that to tap this reservoir it wasn't enough to skim its surface, pausing here or there to sell them copies of the newspaper. This hatred had to be sharpened by directing it at the real source of the problem. It had to be channeled and directed and turned into revolutionary practice—into something more organized and lasting.

Relying on People

The people from the *Revolutionary Worker* who took up this task didn't know much about it. But they were determined to "learn warfare through warfare." They began reading articles from the paper first in English and then in Spanish and getting with each other to discuss them in Spanish and then they went back out to the people. Because they couldn't speak the language of the people very well themselves, they were forced to look for and rely on people coming forward who had a more advanced understanding of revolutionary ideas and the need for revolutionary struggle against this system, to unite with them to keep going out more and more broadly. And they found such people.

As one of these workers said, "Many people here know that we are held down by the capitalists and that we are oppressed. They know life is very hard. Even when we work hard, we still have to try to advance even just to live. Many are already conscious of the fact that it is this system that oppresses us. But many say, 'This is the way that it is. I was born poor and I will die poor.' But in the future hunger will teach them, and necessity will teach them to struggle and they will become a force. They will have to fight and this paper is the only thing that tells us why and how to fight. People will read it, some are already reading it. If they understand and agree they will begin to join us in fighting. Many are going to do this because in reality each knows that they live at the bottom of this society, that they are oppressed, and it is a question of capitalism."

"These people can be brought to see that it is a question of struggle, a question of preparing ourselves, like has happened in every country where a revolutionary war took place. It is

Continued on page 14

Network

Continued from page 12

always difficult at the start. In my opinion, this revolutionary war we're fighting is very young in the world. It is natural to begin with that there won't be very many people fighting and even that some people will hate those of us who already want to fight this war, because they hate war and they are afraid of it. This is natural. But people can learn. With this newspaper we can bring them information to learn from: Where is your life now? What is the source of all your problems? What is happening in the world? People are struggling, and if you want to struggle too, here is the way to begin now, with this newspaper."

And it began to happen. The communists looked for different ways to tap the potential of the people to bring forward new fighters. Groups began to meet and discuss the questions the paper raised. People from the community began helping to write leaflets in Spanish. A group from the community came to a conference about the paper which was held only six weeks after the first *El Obrero Revolucionario* was sold. It was held bilingually. The 10-minute film about the Houston rebellion came to town and when the people in the community heard about it, film showings were set up in houses and on the walls of apartment buildings. One older man organized a showing in his home and brought out fifteen friends.

Deeper Questions

Deeper questions arose that demanded an answer. At one of these film showings a communist sold copies of the Party's pamphlet "Cuba: The Evaporation of a Myth." Doing this sparked a heated struggle among the people about how to sum up the Cuban revolution. For example, one worker thought Cuba was great, a revolutionary country that, along with the Soviet Union, aided freedom struggles in Latin America and around the world. But he also bought a Cuba pamphlet, which puts out a very different view.

Sometime later somebody went to talk with him about the pamphlet and what he now thought about Cuba and the Soviet Union. This worker said, "I didn't really know anything about Cuba and the Soviet Union except that there had been revolutions, and I knew that I was for revolutions against this system. I only understood that the Soviet Union is capitalist when I read that pamphlet and that it isn't a question of any kind of revolution, but of one led by the working class. One thing I've learned from working with you all is that you communists have been lucky. You have read Marxism. All my life I've had a lot of these ideas about this system and I've always known that I was oppressed and that the people and the workers were oppressed. And I have thought 'Revolution is the answer.' But I didn't know anything about it and I didn't know how to find out. I tried to read books. I even read a lot of books about all kinds of different religions because I thought there might be some answers there. I read about Buddha and I read about Krishna, but it all seemed like the same shit. Now I know what I have to do and what I want to do, I want to read and study Marxism."

Every time a communist came into the community, people would be drawn out of their houses and into the streets like iron to a magnet. One day a large discussion broke out in a parking lot about religion, about why communists were atheists. The people who had come to sell the paper left. But when they came back next time they were told dozens of people had stayed in that parking lot discussing their questions and lots of politics for several hours more.

Bringing Trouble?

But of course it wasn't all smiles and agreement. People had sharp questions on their minds. "The people have it so much better here than in the countries we came from—we'll never make revolution here." "What can we do—there aren't enough of us." "This is the strongest country in the

world—how can you make revolution against it." And there were those who charged that revolutionaries and communists only bring trouble to the people, that where communists came—the police were sure to follow, creating more problems for those in this country "illegally."

The work around the newspaper among the people went through a process of development. When they first heard about it, many people were open and curious, "Who are these people, why are they here, what do they want from us." Many people liked the paper and a lot of copies were sold. But as the work went on, it deepened, the contradictions in the situation sharpened. People at first had only looked at the newspaper as a "good thing," something that would give them information about the country and the world and the struggles of the people. And they had looked at the communists as people who "wanted to do good things for the people." But the communists challenged them from the beginning, "If all we are doing is good, then you should be doing it, too. It isn't enough to buy and read the paper in your own home, liking what it has to say. Why do you like it? What is it really saying? It is saying that we must get organized and prepared now, putting this paper into the hands of millions so that when the time is ripe millions can rise up and do away with this system for good. How can a handful of us carry out this task? Step forward and join our ranks."

While it was necessary to struggle to advance the work of the paper, it was also necessary for the communists to struggle against pre-conceived notions—little boxes into which everything must neatly fit. In particular people sometimes tended to forget what Mao Tsetung once said, "Once correct ideas... are grasped by the masses, these ideas turn into a material force which changes society and changes the world." Sometimes there was a tendency to think that the "organizers" had to be everywhere to make anything happen, and to forget the tremendous organizing role the paper itself can play when people read it.

One day in the midst of a more organized discussion group on the paper, one worker spoke up and said he liked the wide open parking lot discussions better since they involved more

people. One organizer immediately reacted against this and said, "No, we have to have organized groups." Later on people became clear that it was wrong to pit one against the other like this, and when it was explained to the worker that both were important and that each could help build the other, he readily agreed. People were creating their own forms, with the paper and its political line acting as the unifying link. Things always had to be taken to a higher level but over-formalized ideas about what a newspaper network was had to be dumped. When people gathered in a parking lot to work on their cars and discuss the paper, the parking lot became part of the network. When people talked about the paper in cars on the way back and forth to work, that was part of the network too.

Battle Sharpens Up

There were those in the community who had real reason to dislike the newspaper. Some are even small capitalists—ready to "loan" a \$100 to be "paid back when you can" and they line up work—in their own businesses slaving for pennies. Some of these and others like them would at first smile and joke when the paper came into the community, but as soon as the paper sellers would leave, the tune would change to backbiting attack.

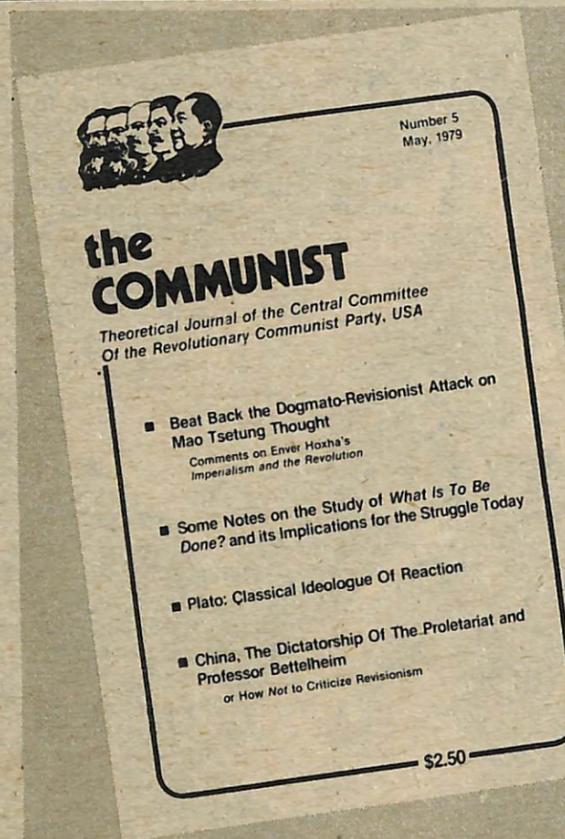
One man who had begun to read and sell the newspaper reported that he was visited by the FBI. He said they came asking by name for the communist from the *Revolutionary Worker* and told him, "Be careful. If you play with fire you'll get burned." This story caused still more controversy among the broader masses. Some people said, "You see, these communists and their paper can only bring trouble to us." But others stood firm. "I believe as in the whole world we need revolution here but the police will come around and grab someone up and put him in their car and take him away—and this gives rise to the idea that you can't do anything with revolutionary ideas. But for me, I know that one day I will die. This is true for everyone. But what does it say to me—it says that I have to die and I'll have to die still oppressed. No, for me it is better to die fighting with the whole world. In the country I come from things are heating up. My country today is like a tank of gas that needs on-

ly a match to explode. Many will die if that happens but what will the future be—will the future be more of the same oppression? This is the same question in this country. This is what we believe—we have to fight. There is no other way and we have to fight so that our children will not be slaves."

As the situation sharpened with the *Revolutionary Worker* at the heart of the controversy, some people who had been buying and even selling the paper stepped back and they said, "This is too much for me right now, and I can get by on my own." But still others came forward when they saw how things were coming down. One man who had become active around the paper was given a choice by others he was sharing a room with—either cut it out or move out into his car. At the time he put it, "You know there is a nice bed in my car."

The situation continues to sharpen up, and the enemy is adding on pressure in many ways. But many are getting a clearer and clearer understanding of what the stakes are and the enemy will not have an easy task in pulling up all the roots that have been developed by the *Revolutionary Worker*.

One of the workers summed it up like this, "This paper gives us organization. I'm not talking about organization like in barracks in an army. But it's a system of organization just the same, an organization of understanding where people begin to think in the same way, looking for the sparks that will flare up, the same sparks that will help us to rise up in revolution. There are already people in this organization of ours, and we are in theirs, and already we can begin to take a hold of these sparks, to unite together and to fight. But you understand, it is this paper that gives us the way to unite together. Many more people already want to fight. They are ready to fight with us. But the questions are there: Who do we fight against and how do we fight? This paper teaches us what we are fighting against—the system of capitalism—and that capitalism is the rich, and their police and their army and all that they have. This newspaper is our system of organization that is preparing us to fight—and it is a good system, and today it is our main one." ■



Number 5
May, 1979

**the
COMMUNIST**
Theoretical Journal of the Central Committee
Of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA

- Beat Back the Dogmatic-Revisionist Attack on Mao Tsetung Thought
Comments on Enver Hoxha's Imperialism and the Revolution
- Some Notes on the Study of What Is To Be Done? and its Implications for the Struggle Today
- Plato: Classical Ideologue Of Reaction
- China, The Dictatorship Of The Proletariat and Professor Bettelheim
or How Not to Criticize Revisionism

\$2.50

ARM YOURSELF!



With the Science of Marxism-Leninism

"Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement."
—V.I. Lenin

The latest issue of *The Communist* contains a number of articles which represent a valuable contribution to the class struggle on the theoretical front:

- Full reply to Hoxha's wretched attack on Mao Tsetung Thought. When revisionism triumphed, for the moment, in China after Mao's death, many revolutionaries looked to Albania with hope. But now this article shows how Enver Hoxha's new book is really a stab in the back and betrayal of Marxism and revolution.

- Lenin's *What Is To Be Done?* and its role today. This book of Lenin's played a crucial role, not only in preparing the way for the Russian Revolution, but in other times and places. What Lenin says here has been the subject of debate among revolutionaries throughout the 1970s.

- Plato was an ancient Greek reactionary. But the bourgeoisie still finds him relevant and likes to push him. The proletariat has an interest in discovering the *real* roots of Plato's thought.

- Charles Bettelheim was the President of the France-China Friendship Association, but quit in protest against the revisionist takeover in China. Now he has written an analysis of the counter-revolution in China. But is his criticism really based on revolutionary Marxism, or not?

Order from: RCP Publications This issue: \$2.50
Box 3486 (Include 50c postage)
Chicago, IL 60654

Subscription for 4 issues: \$10