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New York, N.Y. 10014
February 28, 1975

TO ALL BRANCH ORGANIZERS AND EDUCATION DIRECTORS

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed are two new study guides from the National Education Department: a two-class series on Lenin's "Left-Wing" Communism: An Infantile Disorder, and a three-class series on The State and Revolution.

Branch organizers should note that an additional copy of the study guide is included in this mailing for the branch education director.

Comradely,

Fred Feldman

Fred Feldman
National Education Department

"Left-Wing" Communism: An Infantile Disorder

(a two-class series)

A two-class study guide based on Lenin's book. While Trotsky's three-volume History of the Russian Revolution is too long to include in the supplementary reading, it is important for a deeper understanding of this work. "Left-Wing" Communism: An Infantile Disorder is available in many editions. References in this study guide are to Lenin, Collected Works (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1964), Volume 31, pp. 21-118.

Class 1. Ultraleftism and the Bolshevik Example

Reading: "Left-Wing" Communism: An Infantile Disorder, pp. 21-56 (Chapters I-VI)

Supplementary Reading: Dynamics of World Revolution Today (Pathfinder, 1974, \$2.25), pp. 119-130; "The School of Revolutionary Strategy," in The First Five Years of the Communist International, by Leon Trotsky, (Pathfinder, \$3.75) Volume 2, pp. 1-44; "Preface to the Polish edition of 'Left-Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder'" in Trotsky's Writings: 1932 (Pathfinder, \$3.95)

Questions:

1. What aspects of the tactics and strategy used in making the Russian revolution have international applicability? What misconceptions about the Bolshevik strategy encouraged ultraleftism?

2. What is ultraleftism? Why does Lenin call it petty-bourgeois revolutionism? Describe it and give examples. How do the methods of struggle favored by petty-bourgeois revolutionists differ from proletarian methods of struggle? What features of the post-World-War-II pattern of world revolution and the current radicalization have favored the revival of petty-bourgeois revolutionism?

3. Lenin writes that "the broadest masses become convinced" of the correctness of the revolutionary party and its program "by their own experience." (Italics in original.) Discuss this idea. How has it been put into practice by the SWP and YSA? How does this approach differ from that of "exemplary actions"? Give examples.

4. Why does Lenin favor taking advantage of every opportunity for legal work? Discuss the ultraleft view that legal activity inevitably leads to reformism. What are examples of the kind of revolutionary work that was illegal in pre-revolutionary Russia? In most capitalist countries during World War I? Give examples and discuss the ultraleft opposition to taking advantage of legality in the U. S. today (e. g., opposition to the SWP suit against the government, etc.).

5. What are the flaws in the position that revolutionists should work only in organizations that put forward a "revolutionary line"? What do revolutionists counterpose to this approach?

6. Why is it incorrect to make support for socialist revolution a condition for membership in unions? How

would such an approach affect the prospects of winning workers to revolutionary socialism?

Class 2. Ultraleftism and Revolutionary Tactics

Reading: "Left-Wing" Communism: An Infantile Disorder, pp. 56-118 (Chapters VII-X and Appendix).
Supplementary Reading: Liberalism, Ultraleftism or Mass Action, by Peter Camejo (Pathfinder, \$.35); "Trotsky's Transitional Program: Its Origins and Significance for Today," by Joseph Hansen in The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution (Pathfinder, \$2.45), pp. 9-31; "The Communist Attitude to Parliamentary Reformism (Theses Adopted at the 2nd Congress of the Communist International, 1920)," in Aspects of Socialist Election Policy (Education for Socialists bulletin, \$1.25), pp. 5-8; "In Reply to the IMT's Open Letter No. 2," by the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores, in the January 20, 1975 issue of Intercontinental Press.

Questions:

1. Why did Lenin consider participation in bourgeois elections and bourgeois parliaments as "obligatory"? What were the arguments against this? Evaluate these arguments.

2. How did Lenin define electoral boycott? Under what circumstances is a boycott of bourgeois elections justified? Why is it incorrect to counterpose the perspective of Soviets or dual power to participation by revolutionists in bourgeois elections?

3. Discuss Lenin's description of Bolshevik strategy after the February revolution: "At the beginning of the period mentioned, we did not call for the overthrow of the government, but explained that it was impossible to overthrow it without first changing the composition and the temper of the Soviets. We did not proclaim a boycott of the bourgeois parliament, the Constituent Assembly, but said... that a bourgeois Republic with a Constituent Assembly would be better than a bourgeois republic without a Constituent Assembly, but that a 'workers' and peasants' republic', a Soviet republic, would be better than any bourgeois-democratic, parliamentary republic." (p. 31).

Why would it have been incorrect to call for the overthrow of the government immediately after February 1917? Do Marxists ever defend bourgeois democracy against more repressive forms of bourgeois rule? Why? Give examples. Why do Marxists sometimes advocate the creation of bourgeois-democratic institutions, like the Constituent Assembly in 1917? Give other examples. Why doesn't this contradict the revolutionary stand of opposition to all capitalist rule?

4. How should revolutionists make tactical decisions? Why is it dangerous to draw immediate tactical conclusions from correct historical generalizations ("parliamentarism is outmoded" or "capitalism is ripe

for revolution")? Give other examples. Discuss examples of mistaking wishes for reality in politics and their results.

5. How is Lenin's concept of compromises with other organizations similar to the united-front tactic? What "compromises" have we made in the antiwar and abortion-law-repeal movements? In the building of the December 14 demonstration against the racist offensive? Why were these compromises principled? How did they help to advance the class struggle?

6. Why is it vital for a revolutionary party to "seek out the forms of transition or approach to the proletarian revolution"? Why can't revolutionists just "make the revolution" without worrying about "forms of transition or approach "? How has the Trotskyist movement sought out the "forms of tran-

sition or approach"? What do sectarians and ultralefts counterpose to this?

7. Lenin writes that the Bolsheviks were distinguished from the reformists, not by abstention from elections, unions, or agreements with other organizations, but by why and how they ran in elections, worked in unions, and collaborated with other organizations. Discuss this concept. Can the same distinction be made between revolutionary, reformist, and ultraleft approaches in the U. S. ?

8. Did the tactics of the ultralefts aid or retard a mass break with the reformists in Lenin's time? Do they aid or retard it today? Discuss and give examples.

9. Why did Lenin favor electoral support to the British Labour Party? Is this tactic still valid today? Discuss.

The State and Revolution

(a three-class series)

The following is a three-class series based on readings from Lenin's pamphlet, The State and Revolution. Lenin's work is available in a wide variety of editions.

The aim of these classes is to provide an introduction to the Marxist theory of the state. Other classes which may be useful in a more extensive treatment of this subject are "The Class Nature of the Soviet Union" (the fifth class in the six-class study guide on Stalinism) and the five-class study guide on "The Postwar Transformations in Eastern Europe, China, and Cuba." Both study guides can be found in Party Builder, Volume 8, No. 3 in 1974.

Class 1. Class Society and the State

Required Reading: From The State and Revolution: Chapter 1, "Class Society and the State"

Supplementary Reading: The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State by Frederick Engels (Pathfinder, \$2.25), pp. 108-166

Questions

1. Has the state always existed? Why did it come into being?
2. Why is every state necessarily an organ of class domination? Why is it "the state of the economically dominant class"? Why can't the state act as a neutral arbiter in class conflicts?
3. Were Bonapartist regimes like that of Napoleon or Louis Bonaparte in France truly independent in a class sense? What class interests did they serve? What is Bonapartism, and how does it differ from other regimes?
4. Why does every state require a special apparatus of repression? How and why does this differ from the armed population? Why can't a class-divided society rely on the armed people, as did early societies? What is wrong with the argument that technological advance, increased social complexity, and the division of labor make it "impossible" to replace the "special bodies of armed men" with the armed people?
5. Why does the imperialist epoch necessitate a huge increase in the state apparatus? Give examples of how this trend has developed since Lenin wrote The State and Revolution.
6. According to Engels and Lenin, how did the ruling class assure its dominance in democratic republics? How does it do this in bourgeois democracies like the U. S. today? Why is the democratic republic "the best possible political shell for capitalism"?
7. Is the character of the state as a repressive force against the oppressed class expressed in bourgeois democracies as well as in dictatorships? How?

Class 2. Proletarian Revolution and the State

Required Reading: From The State and Revolution:

Chapter 2, "The Experiences of 1848-51;" Chapter 3, "The Experience of the Paris Commune of 1871;"

Chapter 6, "Vulgarisation of Marx by the Opportunists"

Supplementary Reading: The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, by Karl Marx, available in numerous editions; from The Civil War in France by Karl Marx:

"Address of the General Council of the International Association of Workingmen," available in numerous editions.

Questions

1. Why did Marx conclude that it was necessary to "shatter" and "break up" the bourgeois state machine? Discuss and give examples of the "thousand threads" that tie this machine to the capitalist class. Why is this machine incapable of carrying out revolutionary measures?
2. What has been the fate of efforts to reform the system by "simply laying hold of the ready-made state machinery" and using it for "socialist" purposes? Give examples.
3. What is the dictatorship of the proletariat? How does the use of the term "dictatorship" here differ from the common use of the word to describe brutally repressive regimes that deny all democratic rights?
4. Is a bourgeois state (even a bourgeois democracy) also a dictatorship? Why is real democracy impossible in a bourgeois society?
5. How did the Paris Commune deal with capitalist political institutions like the standing army, police, judiciary, and the state officialdom?
6. Why do Marxists counterpose proletarian democracy to bourgeois parliamentarism? What are the differences between the Paris Commune or the Soviets and a bourgeois parliament? How does the separation of "legislative" and "executive" powers in a bourgeois parliamentary system help the capitalists?
7. What are the tasks of a government like the Paris Commune with regard to property relations? Why can't the political gains of the proletarian revolution (workers councils, etc.) be preserved if capitalist property relations are preserved?
8. What measures did Lenin propose for preventing the development of bureaucracy under a proletarian dictatorship?
9. How does proletarian democracy differ from "federalism"? What was the position of Marx and Engels, and Lenin on the anarchist bias in favor of "federalism" and "decentralization" in general?
10. What are the fundamental differences between Marxism and anarchism on the question of the state? What are the fundamental differences between

Marxism and reformism on the state?

Class 3. Proletarian Dictatorship and the Withering
Away of the State

Required Reading: From The State and Revolution:
Chapter 4, "Supplementary Explanations by Engels";
Chapter 5, "The economic Basis of the Withering
Away of the State"

Supplementary Reading: "The State", by Lenin in
Collected Works (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1964),
Volume 29, pp. 470-489; From The Revolution Be-
trayed, by Leon Trotsky: "Socialism and the State,"
pp. 45-64; "Social Relations in the Soviet Union," pp.
234-256; "Whither the Soviet Union?" pp. 273-290.

Questions:

1. What will be the relation between "democracy"
and "dictatorship" in a workers state? What is the
revolutionary Marxist position on freedom of speech,
the press, etc.?

2. Why do Marxists hold that workers are fully able
to administer the workers state? Does that mean there
will be no need for specialists in different fields?

3. Do Marxists believe that a state will always
exist? Why do Marxists believe that the anarchist slo-
gan of "immediate abolition of the state" after the
revolution is an impossibility? What factors will make
it possible for the state to wither away?

4. What are the differences between the two
stages of Communist society (or socialism and com-
munism)? Has the Soviet Union or China today reached
either of these stages?

5. Why will democracy also wither away in a com-
munist society?

6. What does Lenin mean when he says that
"equal right' is also an injustice"? Discuss this state-
ment: "It follows that under Communism there remains
for a time not only bourgeois right, but even the
bourgeois state -- without a bourgeoisie."

7. Why did the state in the Soviet Union degen-
erate instead of withering away? Does the role of the
state apparatus in protecting "bourgeois right" help
us to understand the development of the bureaucratic
caste?

8. What has the Marxist analysis of the Soviet
Union and the overturns in Eastern Europe, China, and
Cuba added to the Marxist theory of the state?