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DEMOCRATIC CENTRALIZATION

We consider centralization and democrary as separate things, but Democratic Centralization is a permanent combination of the two as a result of the action of the Party.

As a basis of our program, the party determines democratically the direction of its action. Once this direction is determined, its realization is entrusted to a centralized directory which decides everything concerning the action. The party must apply itself militantly to such action.

It is obvious that this conception is indispensable for the action of the Party which must always group all its forces in order to act effectively. This conception of the party working with discipline, following a plan, like a factory, is an extraordinarily important contribution of Lenin. But there is another aspect of the necessity of centralization and discipline in the Party. The idea and practice of discipline, the subordination of all activity to the needs of the party activity, are indispensable to the formation and the education of militant Bolshevists, capable of winning the majority of the worker class.

The organization becomes active not through discussion, but through the sacrifices large and small that one imposes on oneself for the party. Entrance into the party is voluntary, but once one has chosen to become a member of it, it is necessary to devote every day to the battle which the party must lead without respite in order to escape the pressure of official public opinion. To do so, the party must aid its workers and guard its boundaries by the practice of discipline.

The ideal of the petty-bourgeois, the anarchist, or the Social-Democrat is "the free man". We deny the existence of that liberty in actual society. In the socialist society, man will be free, but our party is not a preview of that society: it is an instrument of battle in the capitalist society. The inability to devote oneself in theory or in practice to the "discipline of iron" of the bolshevists has always been an infallible sign of petty-bourgeois tendencies in or out of our ranks.

On the question of Democracy, false ideas have very often been developed.

The practice of democracy must be included in the framework of our general objective and not as a principle outside of it. We are not able to discuss everything at any time or under all situations in the Party. We are not a discussion group but an organization of action. It is obligatory to subordinate discussions to the action of the Party. In order to decide upon that action, wide discussion is necessary, but once decided, each must apply himself. Naturally, that does not mean abandoning one's opinion; on the contrary, when the discussion is renewed, it is the duty of the worker to attempt to convince the others of his point of view. But each must understand that the discussion has as its purpose to make clear to the party what it must do, to best understand the situation and not to gain triumphs in an oratorical club contest.

At the same time and equally important, democracy means the right to choose the leadership and the possibility of doing it in recognition of ability. The eligibility of chiefs is obviously an indispensable democratic right, but it is nothing if the most complete publicity is not given to their opinions, their actions and their good and bad qualities. This is indispensable in the election of these chiefs and their education, for if they must break away from the official public opinion, the opinions of the members of the party must be for them a fundamental criterion.

Democracy in the party is as indispensable an element as discipline for cohesion, strengthening and self-confidence. Cannon writes: "A party cannot be pushed, it must be educated - that is if you have in view the construction of a revolutionary party. A party which does not act consciously, with the utmost knowledge of what it is doing and why it does it, is not worth much."

The combination of centralization and democracy in all its echelons and at all stages is an irreplaceable basis for the construction of a revolutionary party. The program of the party will not live, will not penetrate either the consciousness of the working class, or that of the militants, without the practice of that organizational method of bolshevism.

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THE SOCIAL COMPOSITION OF THE PARTY

But the best program and the best methods of organization are only able to reform to a certain extent individuals coming from the Bourgeois society. If the composition of the party is largely petty-bourgeois, if the environment in which they live is petty-bourgeois, then some of the faults of that social stratum will penetrate the party, in spite of its program and its methods. They will end by breaking up and transforming the one into the other.

In the course of the battle against the petty-bourgeois fraction of the American party, Trotsky wrote: "The class composition of the party must correspond to its class program. The American section of the 4th International will become proletarian or will cease to exist."

The formation of our conceptions is not only the fruit of study, but also of the conditions of existence and of the environment in which one lives.

The history of the worker movement shows that the trends which would revise our program or our organizational regime rest most often on the elements coming from the petty-bourgeois. Each time it has been shown that the attacks against the "too high level" of our program or against discipline reflect the pressure of the petty-bourgeoisie in our ranks. This pressure is verified in the split in France. As early as 1903, LENIN fought such tendencies (notice in particular: "One step forward, two steps backwards"), as well as MARX and ENGELS. On the other hand, our program and our methods are much more easily assimilated by the workers. LENIN wrote, for example: "The discipline and the organization, which the bourgeois intellectual has so much trouble overcoming, are assimilated very easily by the proletariat, due precisely to that 'school' of the factory. The mortal fear of that school, the absolute incomprehension of its importance as an element of organization, characterize well the methods of thought which reflect the conditions of existence of the petty-bourgeoisie, and breeds that aspect of anarchy which the German social-democrats call 'Edelanarchismus,' that is to say: the anarchy of Mr. 'distinguished', the anarchy of the 'grand seigneur'."

This question of agreement upon the nature of the class program (its fundamental principles and its political conclusions), the regime and the social composition of the Party is a key problem upon which in particular LENIN and TROTSKY wrote lengthily and often. Let us confine ourselves to two conclusions:

First, the necessity for the party to direct conscientiously itself towards the trade unions and businesses. At each stage of construction of the revolutionary party we see that necessity always and anew. LENIN, during the whole fight for the bolshevick party insists on that idea: "each business must be our citadel". TROTSKY in "new courses" insists on the fact that "the fundamental cells of the party are the nucleii o. the factory". In the fight against SCHACHTMAN, he insists without ceasing on the indispensable character of that objective.

It is impossible to have a stable revolutionary party which will develop itself and actually form bolshevists, if it does not seek unceasingly to penetrate the working milieu. All retreat on this point is as grave as a political error.

Only such an orientation, systematically applied, enables the party to proletarianize unceasingly its social composition and to impose the thoughts of the workers on it. Thus, in the same way, we form the bolshevick cadres, coming from the working class itself. Such a social composition is a gage of stability, perseverance and organized and disciplined activity. It is an indispensable factor for the progress and the success of the Party.

The second conclusion is the necessity to assimilate and educate away from the intellectual elements militants coming into our parties from the petty-bourgeois who are the most common.

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The position of TROTSKY concerning intellectuals is well known. They must aid the workers, teach them before attempting to lead them. In a letter to S.I. (sic - not translated) in 1932, reproduced in the October 1945 issue of IVth International, he even writes: "If ten intellectuals in Paris, Berlin or New York having already belonged to different organizations, addressed us with the request to be admitted into our ranks, I would give the following advice: subject them to a series of tests on all questions of the program; wet them in the rain, dry them in the sun and finally after a new careful examination, accept perhaps one or two of them."

LENIN is just as strict. (See "One Step Forward, Two Steps Backwards")

Is that to say that there exists an "anti-intellectual" prejudice in the ranks of Marxism or a distrust of culture? No, in reality, CANNON correctly said that the workers of the Party regard culture and intellectuals with much respect. But he well states the question in writing "We approach that question, as all questions, from a critical point of view. Our movement, the movement of scientific socialism, judges things and people from the point of view of class. Our objective is the organization of an advance guard party to direct the proletarian struggle to power and towards the reconstruction of society on socialist bases. That is our "science"; we judge people coming to us from another class by their capacity to identify themselves with our class and through that, the aid they are able to bring to the proletariat in its struggle against capitalism."

The Party knows that the best elements of the condemned classes will come to the proletariat; the "Communist Manifesto" says so and MARX himself is an example of it as well as ENGELS, LENIN and TROTSKY. But they must break completely with their former class and lose themselves totally in their new. Then they can play an immense role. The task of the Party is to aid them to make that change of class. But the best way to aid them is to require "all or nothing", to impose on them a discipline, a proletarian apprenticeship which their original class, where one cultivates individuality, has not given them. If 90% of the intellectuals who have come to the revolutionary party have deserted it, it is not because the Party was too "hard" with them, but often because it has not been (hard) enough in compelling and aiding them to change their class.

It is obvious that the more clear and complete the education, the more serious the discipline, the more proletarian the social composition and the more active our intervention in the class struggle, the easier it will be to integrate those elements which are indispensable to the party because of their intelligence and culture. But we must be sure that this integration is effective and we can even be led to foresee the means of defense of the proletarian nature of the party. Thus the Third International recommended that communist parties purge the unassimilated petty-bourgeois elements. TROTSKY, for his part, insists constantly, during the struggle against SCHACHTMAN, on the necessity of replacing the sympathizing petty-bourgeois elements who, at the end of three or six months, have been incapable of gaining a worker.

Only a very great effort will permit the party to avoid being transformed into a discussion club, alien to the workers and incapable of influencing the worker class.

In order to construct a revolutionary party, it is necessary to establish as a principle that it is the workers that rule it, a principle as important as those of our political program or of our organizational methods.

PERMANENT LIAISON WITH THE LABOR STRUGGLES

The construction of the party necessitates two aspects of this liaison: one of internal organization and another to play our role of educators and of organizers in the working class.

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Socialism, as all science, departs from facts in order to return to facts. Without a permanent liaison with social reality, our discussions and our thoughts would quickly become constructions in the abstract which, under the pretext of improving our ideas, would become more and more detached from reality and would be incapable of helping us to act upon them. We have seen examples of this in our party during these last years resulting in what CANNON has noted in the development of the American Party. Speaking of the sectarians, he said: "Less of the world listens to them, less effect have their words on the march of events and more extreme, unreasonable and hysterical become their projects."

Not to participate unceasingly in the struggle to modify the march of events is the road which leads inevitably to the sectarian disruption of the unity of our conceptions and the nature of our party.

The other aspect of this necessity is that the fundamental task of the party is to aid the workers to draw lessons from their own experiences, to increase to the level of their intelligence, their comprehension of the sense of their struggle, and in their organization. TROTSKY says that LENIN explains tirelessly that each political campaign must lead the workers from particular to general questions, must point out the nature of modern society and the character of the fundamental forces. And this not only in the action of our militants, but insofar as the party itself participates and tries to explain all the political events large and small, showing their connection with and solution for the working class. How to do this without becoming bound to the preoccupations and struggles of the working class?

We recognize another anxiety of LENIN, upon which he dwells insistently in "What To Do?" (Que Faire). The party cannot be content to divulge here and there, fragmentarily, information about capitalist exploitation, but must be a national force assembling all the facts to lead its campaign toward a mutual solution.

Only such an attitude can raise the level of the workers by ignoring the particular facts that they learn and can at the same time weld a strong organization grouping all types of the exploited, and direct all their blows towards the same objectives. It is necessary "to learn to speak politically". It is the constant participation in the battles and in the anxieties of the workers that is our school.

These two aspects are as indissolubly bound as are general education and action.

THE FORMATION OF PROFESSIONAL REVOLUTIONARIES

The party which has an essential revolutionary proletarian character has as a purpose the formation of bolshevick militants capable of organizing the working class and a revolutionary leadership.

We have not insisted unconditionally upon close liaison of the party with all others. It is from combined action, however, that the party draws its development, the penetration of its influence through the masses and also the formation of its militants. With elements whose revolutionary comprehension is elementary, worker militants won on the basis of economic revenge and elements coming from other classes, the party must form bolshevick militants, that is to say, politically conscious cadres. "Forming such militants," writes CANNON, "takes time. No one is born a Bolshevick. That must be learned. And that cannot be learned only in books. It is learned in the course of a long period, combining the undertaking of work, struggles, personal sacrifices, tests, study and discussion. The formation of a bolshevick is a process of long and exacting labor. But in exchange, when you have a bolshevick, you have something. When you have them in large enough numbers, you can do all that you wish; that means a revolution."

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But this task of construction of a bolshevick party is not realized spontaneously. At the heart of the party must exist a leadership which has as its truly essential purpose the directing of that construction and the actions of the party, and implying the holding of power according to a group conception firmly applied.

"The selection and education of a truly revolutionary leadership, capable of resisting the pressure of the bourgeoisie, is an extraordinarily difficult task," writes TROTSKY.

The traits of character, the talents, the will for such a leadership, must contain qualities of all the proletarian party. If the party must correspond in its ideas, its methods, its composition, and its liaisons to the revolutionary class, the leadership must correspond to the party. We cannot predict in advance that men capable of making up such a leadership at the height of its historic task will be found. There is no other means than to produce them through the internal and external struggle. It is from that struggle that there will emerge "those who merit the necessary broad authority, who are capable of working together and who are more or less homogeneous in their political conceptions." We do not wish to attempt to describe the qualities which such leaders must have, qualities different from the qualities of the leaders of other parties. Each member of the party can and must take as a model the militants of the great Bolshevick Party: they were real bolshevicks.

Let us be content to cite a letter from TROTSKY to PAZ, who was opposed to the release of our "VERITE" in 1929: "The comrades who are capable of such initiative and of such personal sacrifices are revolutionaries or can become so because it is by that, Comrade PAZ, that revolutionaries are made. We must have here revolutionaries, learned and ignorant, intelligent and mediocre. But we cannot have here revolutionaries without the will to overcome obstacles, without devotion, without the spirit of sacrifice."

We wish to emphasize one aspect necessary for him who wishes to become and must be a leader: a professional revolutionary.

For a long time, in the Second International during the struggle in our revolutionary movement for the construction of the Bolshevick Party in Russia, this conception was always fought by the petty-bourgeois circles. LENIN shows that it is not possible to have a revolutionary party nor a true leadership without the militants giving all their activity to the Party. TROTSKY, in the letter to PAZ, says this: "Do you think that one can direct the movement, or even a weekly connected with the movement, in passing, as a secondary thing? I have another idea of the revolutionary leader. I believe that he who directs the working Journal, and above all in a situation like ours full of responsibility, cannot be occupied with anything but that work...You know, I suppose, that HAASE, when he wished to become one of the leaders of the German Party, found it necessary to quit his practice of law at Koenigsberg. At the Congress of Iena, HAASE (and even Bebel) was much praised for having made the sacrifice of his 30,000 marks of annual revenue. We Russians (I myself was present at that Congress) were very irritated by these commendations which appeared to us completely petty-bourgeois. I have even spoken of that incident in one of my discourses, to characterize the lack of revolutionary sentiment in the German party, even in its best representatives like BEBEL. And HAASE did not prepare himself in the least for revolutionary situations and for sudden changes.

"I will not dwell here on the past of the Russian Party in times of illegal work. He who belongs to the movement, belongs to it not only with his material means, but with his body and soul. He identifies himself completely with the cause that he serves and it is by these procedures of education that is brought about the creation of fighters who become the many leaders of the proletarian Revolution...

"...You must understand this: He who is the leader (axe), that is to say the director or one of the directors of the revolutionary movement, assumes the right to call on the workers for the greatest of sacrifices, the sacrifice of life included. That right carries with it at least equivalent duties. If not, each intelligent worker will inevitably say: 'If X, who calls on me for the greatest sacrifices, devotes 4/5 or 2/3 of his time, not to assure victory, but to assure his bourgeois existence, that means that he has no confidence in the

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imminence of coming revolution,' and that worker would be correct.

CANNON shows how upon that question was based the rupture between communism and social-democracy in America:

"They (the Communists) never learned to reject the idea that a revolutionary movement aspiring to power can be led by people who practice socialism as a sideline. The typical leader of the old Socialist Party was a jurist practicing law, or a preacher giving sermons, or a writer, or a professional man of one sort or another, who condescended from time to time to come and make a speech.

"The permanent official was the simple hack who did the dirty work, and had no real influence in the Party. The gap between the lowly worker with his desires and his revolutionary aspirations, and the petty-bourgeois chatter-boxes at the top was enormous. The new Communist Party broke with all that and could do so easily, for no leaders of the old type came with courage to carry their support to the Russian Revolution. The Party must bring up from the ranks new leaders and since the very beginning the principle has been established that these leaders must be professionals working for the Party, must devote all their time and all their life to the service of the Party. If one has in mind a party whose purpose is to direct the workers in a real struggle for power, then no other type of leadership is worth considering."

Thousands of arguments have been brought against that conception, in particular, the undemocratic character of such leadership. Previously LENIN showed the falsity of that argument by showing that the selection of that leadership is made by the Party itself, in the course of its internal and external struggle to form and stabilize itself.

In reality, such a leadership is as indispensable for the education of the leaders as for the combat of the Party in society. And a party knowing what it wants must unceasingly tend to select from its ranks militants for educating and forming into professional revolutionaries. We must not accept the disparaging remarks that the petty-bourgeois fraction hurl against that conception, we must answer them: "It is the best job in the world."

This idea of the professional revolutionary must be defined. For one thing, we must not identify him with those we call the full-time workers. On the other hand, it should not be believed that the Party cannot have only professional revolutionaries as adherents.

By professional revolutionaries, we mean militants who are totally at the disposition of the Party, for their activity (replacement, change of work, inside jobs, etc...) and whose essential activity in life is the organization of the proletariat for the gaining of power.

The Party recruits as widely as possible and endeavors to educate each militant and to find for him the activity in which he will be able to serve most efficaciously our cause. But many excellent revolutionary workers, while giving their best to the party, will not be able for diverse reasons (family, health, etc...) to be at its total disposition.

But all the cadres of the Party must organize their life as a function of militantism and try to acquire the intellectual formation and discipline and the physique necessary to the professional revolutionary.

Among the cadres themselves, the militants designated by the council for leading the Party, must be able to consecrate all their time to that sole task--that is to say to be a full-time worker. Each member of the Central Committee must be ready to become a full-time worker whenever the Party demands it of him. Naturally, the Party must be sure to see to it that these full-time workers receive the salary of an average worker in order to work in good conditions.

Here, schematically reviewed, are the essential traits which characterize the Party revolutionary. Discussion must define and make clear this question. This is essential, for it is the criterion which must guide our action.

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Now, we wish to see what actually is our Party, in order to determine in what ways it is most necessary to strengthen it, to develop along the path of bolshevism. Then we will see under what conditions we are struggling, in the heart of the French working class, in order to set the orientation of our action. For we must try not to fail this principle: "A POLITICAL PARTY MUST KNOW WHAT TO DO NOW, AND DO IT BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE."

THE SITUATION IN THE WORKING CLASS

Building the Party means gathering the worker advance guard on the basis of our principles and our methods, in order to influence the public opinion of our class, and leading the workers towards the seizing of power.

The pressure of bourgeois thinking is powerful, the hold of the old worker organizations still very strong, and our forces are limited. It is true that the conditions under which the proletariat lives influences it in our direction. But only the sectarians can think that it is sufficient to polish their ideas in their corner until the working class discovers in them its saviors. The roads by which the workers give their confidence to the bolshevick party are complicated and contradictory. Their evolution is not in one way, nor homogenous for the whole class. Some retire from the struggle, others come into it, thousands of obstacles are created between them and us. Only our intervention, active and uninterrupted, in this process can make the road easy for them, avoid costly experiences and win time.

But this intervention cannot be done haphazardly. To be effective, it must keep an exact account of the true evolution of the state of mind of the workers at all times. That necessitates diplomacy, and correct words of advice. This is indispensable, but insufficient for building the Party. Where to apply our forces, how to dispose them, having a strategy and organizational tactics in a military sense is no less necessary. For that, the first thing is to know well the situation in the working class, what are the aspects of its evolution, where in it is the advance guard, its experience, etc... We wish to refine here what has already been said in the political report.

Today, the phenomenon by far the most important in that it concerns the political state, of psychological importance to the class and its advance guard, is without any doubt the crisis of Stalinism. The FCP is on its downward swing: There is the factor that upsets all the political geography of the class. In the collective thinking of the workers, as in the individual thinking of a large large number of them, confidence in the FCP has received a blow. We find ourselves in a truly dramatic period where what has been the essential hope of the militant cadres of the French proletariat is subject to doubt, to criticism, to disappointment. For years all the treachery of the FCP did not kill the confidence in it. But the experiences have accumulated, more or less consciously, and today something is broken. We are witnessing that very complicated psychological phenomenon of the loss of confidence. The FCP can change its politics, have the correct words for demands, it can recruit still more millions of workers behind it, but it will not repair that which is broken, it will no longer be able to create what gives force to a party: confidence, the total devotion of its lowly worker. The FCP knows this very well and is trying to renew its cadres, to replace those which are disaffected by new ones.

On the evolution of the advance guard depends the immediate future. Will it be broken, put aside? Will one part come with us to build the Party, will we be capable of winning the young who come to the movement or will Stalinism succeed in making new cadres of them? Will the delays of the building of the Party, of the regrouping of the advance guard in its bosom coincide with those the situation leaves us? There are all the questions which the crisis of Stalinism leaves us. Naturally, there is no solution in advance. Only the active struggle will furnish it. But, what we must get firmly in our minds is that in such a situation of changing from one direction to another, our intervention must be resolute and systematic, for it can be decisive.

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It must be absolutely understood that this intervention cannot bring miraculous and sudden results. It is all a process of human and political transformation of the advance guard worker which we are taking part in. It cannot be done from one day to the next, it can only be slowed or accelerated in the course of such and such a battle, such and such an experience, but it will necessitate all kinds of perseverance in all forms of activity in order to transform us into a bolshevick party allied with the masses.

In order to establish this plan of work, let us attempt to see how the advance guard in France is made up.

1) A large part is in the FCP but, even in that part, an important fraction mistrusts its chiefs.

2) Another acts and works under the influence of the FCP, but its doubts are already large enough for them to be no longer organized in that party.

3) Another is so distrustful that it no longer works, it is content to take part in the movements, without trying to direct them. And one wing even has retired from the class struggle and is morally broken.

4) One wing of the advance guard has left Stalinism, but has not joined us and is more or less scattered in organizations with no future: P.S.U., anarchists, autonomous trade unions. It wishes to fight and is looking for the path of a revolutionary organization. Its entering into these organizations very often has that meaning.

5) The young workers would furnish new militants every day and above all would be able to furnish them if an organization was sufficiently attractive. They do not feel drawn by Stalinism, bureaucratic trade unions do not offer them a field for their energy. They are searching, groping, many will be lost for the movement, but still more numerous are those who can and must become the leaders of the workers.

This table, although schematic and above all not showing the numerical weight and relative politics of the different groups, must reflect reality fairly faithfully. On one side is that part of the advance guard which plays the relatively most influential role because it is organized and directed by the FCP. On the other hand is the part unorganized or badly organized, inexperienced, distrustful or broken.

In order to determine our tasks, we must try to understand the evolution of the phenomenon of reconstruction of an advance guard of Communists in the reciprocal influence of its different parts and under the general influence of the evolution of the general situation. In the political report, we have already tackled that question. We showed that one cannot ignore a single criterion for analyzing the possibilities which exist for us to increase the Party numerically, and thus to fix it more deeply in the working class.

The defensive position of the working class does not push it in its entirety into turning towards the revolutionary program and towards our Party and this weighs upon the advance guard. The Stalinist crisis, which expresses itself in the abandonment of militant activity or its slowing down by very many cadres of the French proletariat acts at this time in the same sense. But, in other respects, the proletariat has not undergone a complete defeat and it cannot be said that we are witnessing a great and rapid ebbing of the working class. That is to say, that its mentality is not such that it be a source of complete discouragement for the militant advance guard. As for that part of the advance guard which is today demoralized, we must not believe that it is so for always. It is a quasi-obligatory stage for almost all militants who perceive that they have been betrayed. But many will return to the struggle. In addition, a certain number, small it is true, will draw the conclusion from now on that it is necessary to reconstruct a true communist party.

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From these contradictory aspects, we can deduce that one class of the advance guard, small it is true and which is present even in the form of isolated individuals, may be recruited into a revolutionary party. At the same time, the weakening of Stalinism as a pole of attraction and the diminution of its bureaucratic weight on the class, may permit the militants who have tried to find a solution in diverse organizations, to seek, after they have experienced the inefficiency of these organizations, to regroup in a revolutionary party.

This can produce a solution, particularly for the militants who have searched in anarchism or in autonomous trade unionism. For the FCP we can even take part in some collective evolutions for we can see in that party a tentative independence with respect to the FCP, which can lead to some interesting developments.

On another level, outside the ranks of the actual workers, we are witnessing another product of the crisis of Stalinism which may have a certain influence. We speak of the beginning of dissatisfaction with Stalinism which is being manifested by the intellectuals who were under its influence. Even though they do not play a leading role in the worker class, their talent, their renown and the publicity uses that the FCP made of them, has given them influence in the worker public opinion. Their rupture with Stalinism, if not balanced by a passage to imperialism, but by a sympathetic attitude towards the IVth International, can facilitate the penetration of our Party.

It is necessary to emphasize anew that the grouping of these phenomenona is subject to two important factors:

1) The evolution of the class struggle in France and internationally. It is clear that if the bourgeoisie can rapidly inflict a general defeat on the whole working class, the progressive results of the crisis of Stalinism will be diminished.

2) The deepening of the crisis of Stalinism in the world, in particular the exacerbation of the Yugoslav conflict, combines with and accelerates the crisis of the satellites with their procession of lawsuits, reductions to obedience, etc...

We can draw from this brief analysis the conclusion that our Party can strengthen itself in this situation, not immensely, but relative to our strength, in an important manner, by the winning of the advance guard elements who have broken with the FCP or its influence.

THE FACTORS OF THE FORMATION OF A NEW COMMUNIST ADVANCE GUARD

It is obviously impossible to forecast all the roads which the French worker advance guard may take in order to reconstruct a true Communist party, or above all the principal one they will use. Neither the concrete stages of the evolution of the objective situation, nor the psychological reactions of the advance guard, not the attitude of the party workers, can be foreseen in detail. Moreespecially as the factors react one upon the other, the timing of the reorganization of the advance guard depends above all upon the evolution of the struggle between the classes, and our capacity or incapacity to intervene judiciously.

We must then start with the idea that there are factors about which we can do nothing directly, which take place regardless of our wishes, (actions of the bourgeois parties, etc.), and others upon which we can have a direct influence in order to aid a Communist advance guard to reorganize itself. Naturally in the body of political thinking as a whole, it is those that we will try to understand here.

Let us see first which qualities can serve as a pole of attraction for a section of the advance guard in building a party. They can be grouped as three principles:

1) to be a political and organizational communist tide.

2) to be a force of intervention sufficient for having a certain amount of efficacy in action.

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3) to have a doctrine which explains the past (in particular the reasons for defeats and deceptions) and which gives a revolutionary perspective.

The necessity for the first quality derives from the fact that the essential school of militantism of the French proletarian cadres has been the FCP, be it in its bosom or as leader in the trade unions. The year 1936 gave birth to the first large movement in the working class towards political and trade union organizations. A large part of the militants were turning towards the FCP. But the Socialist Party was maintaining a worker base. Following that, the monopoly of the organization of the workers passed more and more to the FCP to the detriment of the Socialist Party and above all during the war and since. One can say that the large majority of the militant workers today have been to that school, even if they were not formally registered in the FCP.

This state of affairs doubtless has left traces in the thinking and methods of working. Many are reactionary: patriotism, faith in the scheme, etc... But others are incontestably correct, in particular the fact that the teachings of MARX and LENIN are the points of departure and the theory of an organization functioning rigorously and taking part in the workers' struggle. Naturally, these recruits, even, have been corrupted by Stalinism. The names of MARX and LENIN hid a Stalinist education and the bolshevick organizational regime of democratic centralization has been replaced by the regime of the barracks. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to say that the political and organizational methods of the anarchists or social-democrats can only with difficulty be attractive to the French militants of 1949.

Being an effective force in action. That is what is most demanded by the militants of an organization which concerns itself with them. The reasons are diverse, some are sound, the others not. The most important are certainly the following:

- the idea that "nothing can be done against the organization in the hands of the Stalinists".

- the theory that Stalinism has given one to believe that the organizations are the moving force of the struggle and that the workers are only masses for maneuvering.

- the loss of faith in the revolutionary possibilities of the working class. However it may be, it exists incontestably and each militant comes up against it. Working men's struggles and a political clarification will lessen it certainly, but it is a fact which must be taken into account.

Having a policy is the principal problem. We must understand and not lose sight of the fact that the crisis which today cuts across the advance guard is a political crisis. The militants, in turning to Stalinism, think and wish to turn to a means of joining the Revolution and Socialism. In breaking with it or in losing confidence in it, they lose that perspective. Many are broken, but many can return to the struggle. They can only do this if they regain a revolutionary perspective. Up to then, they have been inculcated with the idea that the USSR, the Red Army, as well as the Stalinist parties were the founders of socialism. More or less clearly, they now doubt this, but they have not for the present assimilated the idea that it is the working class which founded socialism. How many militants remain in the FCP solely because it has made them lose confidence in the working class? Then, they think, it is necessary to remain Stalinists in order to save the USSR. Is this not in another echelon the thing which leads those accused by Stalinist processes to "confess"?

Naturally, this political explanation cannot be abstract but must rest upon recent experience and upon the problems of the day. It must, in its form, take into account the problems posed by the Stalinist workers or issuing from the FCP, and must be worded simply, forcefully, etc...and these problems of the realization of our propaganda are very important if we wish it to be effective, but all that must not let us lose sight of what is indispensable, which is that a fundamental Marxist explanation will explain basically great political problems. Without that, all the rest cannot give any result. Once more, it is a question of overcoming a political crisis.

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NON-STALINIST ORGANIZATIONS

Before seeing what we must do, let us see if other political formations cannot play the role of organizer of the advance guard, at least during one period. We wish to be that pole of attraction but it is evident that our strength can be weakened by the success of others. The experience of the French proletariat can then pass through still another party, on the road to the Trotsky party.

1) It is useless to dwell on the fact that the S.F.I.O. (Socialist Party) can no longer become a pole of attraction.

2) Rassemblement Democratique Revolutionnaire has failed shamefully. There is little probability that organizations of that nature, more or less social-democratic and covered with crookedness, will stand a chance of success.

3) It is equally improbable that the anarchists will have a chance. They lack a communistic tradition and in particular their sectarianism with respect to the trade unionist plan will make them appear even more feeble than they are. The wrenchings they have undergone over this plan are quite indicative. Of course, that does not mean that we must ignore them, in action or in discussion and analysis, but that is not the problem here.

4) The Parti Socialiste Unitaire must draw our attention. We have already said that in its breast are being born tendencies towards independence with respect to the FCP. It is useless to make predictions which rest only on a new born situation, about which we have only insufficient information and which perhaps will never develop. Nevertheless, one such evolution could be produced and we must follow it to see if it could lead the Parti Socialiste Unitaire into becoming, to a certain extent, a pole of attraction.

5) According to this plan of the creation of a party capable of recruiting part of the advance guard breaking away from Stalinism, the most important event would be incontestably an important split in the FCP. It is certain that one wing of the FCP, directed by one or more known leaders, would quickly regroup an important part of the French advance guard.

Until now, nothing of that nature has yet happened, in spite of certain very important losses experienced by the FCP. As for the future, it is impossible to predict if such a split will take place, and no more if among the militants already broken away, someone will take the initiative of a regrouping, nor if they will be representative enough to regroup a party around them.

There, roughly, is the description which can be made of the actual situation in the worker advance guard.

OUR DUTIES

We must determine our immediate duties, taking account of many factors which derive from what has been said up to now in this report.

1) We must continue our action for the formation of a Trotskyite worker party, that is to say, the application of our principles defining a bolshevick party.

2) We must lead this action, not in the abstract or in internal efforts, but in the concrete situation, as it concerns struggle in the class to apply the line which fits that situation.

3) To attain most effectively these two objectives, we must see where the Party stands in it, in what respects it must be improved and must determine what we must modify in its structure and its action, in order that in changing ourselves from what we are, we take concrete and realistic steps towards that which we wish to be for attaining our objectives.

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OUR GENERAL ORIENTATION

In the political report and in this report, we have underlined the historical necessity contained in the situation. The advance guard of workers must regroup and organize itself in order to set up a new revolutionary leadership. If not, the bourgeoisie will realize its anti-worker plans. The crisis of Stalinism, the breaking away of many militants from it, gives possibility of it. But we must not lose sight of the fact that this regroupment must be done quite quickly and quite broadly, to prevent the bourgeoisie from winning a large victory, to install its dictatorship and become able to make war. Naturally, even a victory of the bourgeoisie, even war would not signify the end of the struggle for the revolution, that is to say, the struggle for the construction of the IVth International. They would be very important events, but the decay of the capitalist world and the struggle of the proletariat and colonial peoples for their liberation are still more important. But it is no less evident that the future plays a part in the struggle of today for the construction of the Party and assembling of the advance guard. The importance of this discussion is then primary and each one must approach it with the knowledge of our responsibility.

The determination of our orientation must have as an objective the finding of the best way of regrouping the advance guard of our program. Many solutions can be envisaged, starting from our analysis of the situation in the working class.

First appears the idea of working for a split in the FCP to take place together with the experiments of its militants. It is clear that this activity must be limited, given our strength and the structure of the FCP.

Next comes the same question as concerns the Parti Socialiste Unitaire. We cannot make it an essential activity of the Party above all because nothing indicates that that Party could not constitute a pole of regroupment for a Communist advance guard.

We must draw the conclusion from this that these subsidiary activities can only be today, regardless of the importance that they can have at another stage. In the general activity of the Party, they can only be subordinate today, for they can only be the job of the leadership and a small team and not that of all the Party.

The thing which must make us resolute is the fact that until now, no real pole of attraction exists beside us. It is possible that it will come into being, but its greatest effectiveness as profit to us cannot be determined in the abstract. It is a question of the relative strength between us and the other tides revealed in the living struggle. When an organization is established, (be it by a split in the FCP, or by the regrouping of former FCP militants due to the action, for example, of the Yugoslav Communist Party) and it constitutes such a pole of attraction that it isolates us completely, we must fight with all our strength to be that pole of attraction.

That this fight can result in that creation outside of us and in our isolation, is not impossible. We would then envisage our entry into such an organization in order to win it to our ideas. That can be, in the future, the road we must take to win the advance guard to Trotskyism... If the balance of strength necessitates it, we are obviously not against it in principle. But such a tactic can only be discussed and decided by us if it rests solidly on the facts. Until then our essential orientation must be to reinforce ourselves to the maximum in order to become first, and better than other currents, a pole of attraction, opening a revolutionary road in the crisis of Stalinism. In any case, we can only hope to make such organizational changes efficiently if we are a united body, coherent, solidly organized and having a political basis, a Marxist education permitting us to act in a coordinated fashion. Again, such an eventuality can occur, given the eddies produced by the crisis of the FCP. We must not be caught short by it and to best avoid it we must be very sure of the type of party that we wish to construct.

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At the same time work of internal disruption must be done and followed by the leaders to facilitate it, be it the recruiting of groups to the International or group work of our Party in an organization.

BECOMING A POLE OF ATTRACTION

In order to attack this problem, we must ask ourselves the question: Why until now, have we profitted extremely little from the crisis of Stalinism; why have the hundreds and thousands of advance guard workers who have broken with Stalinism not joined us?

The answer is two-fold, from all evidence: for one thing, there are many among these elements, who do not wish to organize, or not at this moment. On the other hand, we may not be a pole of sufficiently powerful attraction. The workers who have left the FCP or its influence are broken or demoralized or, at best, terribly disillusioned and distrustful of parties in general. The political situation, without applying an actual brake on the progress of elements of the advance guard, nevertheless does not tend to counteract this distrust.

Given these facts, we cannot modify them radically, if we take the whole advance guard as a group, but if we examine it closer, no doubt quite a few elements have drawn a lesson from the Stalinist deceit in the general sense of the necessity of replacing the Stalinist party with a true Communist party. Only they do not yet see in us the effective instrument of that reconstruction.

This is equally true for the elements which have regrouped in anarchist or other organizations. And above all this is true for the militants still in the FCP. For them obviously is also added the attachment which they still have for their Party, but naturally that tie is only strong, relative to our lack of appearing yet as an effective replacement in this reconstruction.

The first conclusion is that our first duty is to strengthen ourselves. The fact that we are not succeeding in strengthening ourselves because of our lack of strength would seem to be a vicious circle. In reality it is not, if one looks at it more closely:

1) in strengthening ourselves, we must not expect a lightning-like development.

2) strengthening ourselves as a pole of attraction does not mean only numerical increase, but improvement in quality and doctrine also.

3) an organized and smooth action can permit us to strengthen ourselves organizationally if we use it with care on receptive environments.

The strength of a party is not measured only by its numerical strength, but also by the correctness of its doctrine, its capacity for creating a zone of influence around its militants, by the quality of its propaganda, its teaching power, the strength of conviction of its arguments, and its scope. It is also manifested by its cohesion, its discipline, and the political moulding of its militants, enabling them to be real cadres and leaders in the working class. This does not mean that we must neglect numerical strengthening; on the contrary, but that by itself cannot resolve everything and above all we cannot have the illusion that it will transform from one day to the next the whole character of the advance guard. For a whole period yet, we must brace ourselves, given our small numbers, to compensate by a high quality of doctrine and organization.

INTERIOR ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTHENING

Strict organizational functioning cannot be considered as a simple matter of internal improvement for the progress of our organization. We must impress upon ourselves the idea that there will be no realization of any line of attack however correct it may be; if we do not so place our forces, if we do not so organize ourselves, in the interior of the Party, in order to make it live. Attempting each day to put into practice our bolshevick principles is a strengthening element that the experience of the last year has plainly shown, as much positively as negatively.

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WINNING A ZONE OF INFLUENCE AND ADHERENTS

We have already discussed this aspect of the question, at the time of the discussion of the importance of youth work and trade union work.

The youth of today is a potential force that our ideas can attract more easily than any other group. It wishes, even if it is confused, that the world with no future for itself be changed. It does not carry the weight of the treachery of the old organizations, its enthusiasm can fight for the ideas of the revolution before they triumph. Incontestably, the youth can strengthen our organization and thus augment its attractive power.

The construction of a trade union opposition is, itself, a very important possibility for breaking down our isolation.

Special reports will be made on these questions.

For the present, we must not hope to be able to recruit very widely. But what is possible is to strengthen considerably the spreading of our ideas and our force of intervention in the youth and the unions. Thus we can be a force of sufficient strength to attract the militants who can and will fight for the construction of a Communist party.

Naturally, it is not a question of two distinct stages following each other in time. We wish to emphasize that even in recruiting, we will only have sufficient strength if each militant fights to increase our influence with the youth and in the trade unions.

THE PRIORITY OF POLITICAL WORK

We have already emphasized the importance of the political response to be given to the crisis of the FCP which is a political crisis. We must give not only orders for immediate action but at the same time answers to the agonizing questions which present themselves to the militants doubting or breaking with Stalinism: why have they been betrayed? What to do now, etc...?

For us to turn towards the youth and the unions without sufficient propaganda armament would be the same as turning a blank face towards them. We must study very objectively as the number one job the political production of the Party and its literary dispersal in the "Verite", "IVth International" and in brochures.

IF WE RECOGNIZE THE FACTS THAT WITHOUT A DOCTRINE, WITHOUT AN OBJECTIVE AND INFORMED ANSWER TO ALL THE PROBLEMS, WITHOUT SUFFICIENT DISTRIBUTION, WE CANNOT STRENGTHEN OURSELVES AS A POLE OF ATTRACTION, WE MUST START FROM THAT POINT IN ORDER TO ENVISAGE SUBSEQUENT OTHER TASKS. IF NOT, WE WILL BE ONLY A MILITANT ACTION FOR THE SATISFACTION OF OUR CONSCIENCE AND NOT RESPONDING TO THE PRIMARY NECESSITY OF THE HOUR.

WHERE DO WE STAND?

To see what we must do for the present in order to realize the general objectives enumerated above, we must understand where we stand in our evolution.

WHERE DO WE STAND?

We are constructing the Party with the heritage of the psychological past, with its negative sides and its positive sides.

It is not a question of making a balance sheet but of trying above all to understand what we lack or what is bad according to the preceding criteria. No doubt, one will see possibilities of disparagement there. Our experience is sufficient to permit us to admit our weaknesses, and in any event we will certainly surmount them in due time.

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We have safe-guarded in the course of many mistakes and battles the two fundamental things upon which one may build solidly: our program and our integration in the International. Even if it were only that, the essentials would have been well adhered to.

In what concerns the other characteristics of the Trotskyist worker party, we have made progress but much remains to be done. An immense step has been taken in the last period, the clearly expressed wish to construct a Trotskyist worker party. The present report is a witness of that. The moral report will show the progress and the set-backs, we wish here only to establish where we are.

The moral report of the Fifth Congress would show how the tradition of the past influences us: the social composition heavily petty-bourgeois due to the historic development of Trotskyism before the war, the almost uniquely propagandist tradition, the lack of penetration into the working class, the political errors which impede our development.

The development of the Party, a certain strengthening of its proletarian basis, and the evolution of the situation rested on the bitterness of the fight against the petty-bourgeois tendency, which finally left the Party. Since the morrow of the rupture, we fixed our objective according to the desires of the liquidators: to construct a Trotskyist worker party. Since, some progress has been made on this road, but still insufficient. The first reason for that insufficiency must be attributed to ourselves. During all the fight of splitting off ("fraction") which preceded the rupture, we did not fix as clearly as we are trying to do today our program on the question of the Party. We were much too contented to argue about questions of political orientation. It was indispensable, but insufficient. It was equally necessary to show what kind of Party we wished to construct and to educate the party in the fight on that organizational program. We defended Trotskyism, but not all Trotskyism which had as an integral part its own conception of the Party. Since then, we have here and there, in our literature or in our acts, shown what it was necessary to construct, but in a fragmentary fashion, and this has been a real brake to the strengthening and even the numerical development of the Party. Incontestable progress has been made and it can serve as a means of acceleration in the future, but the lack of a group program has incontestably limited it.

In summation, we must realize:

1) The systematic education for making our doctrine spread through the Party is absolutely insufficient.

This is serious in particular because the defection of former leaders leaves the Party with the number of "old" Trotskyists completely limited. One sole leader was present at the founding of the movement in France. Very few of the militants were in the Party before the war. The large majority of the Party is very young in age, hence in experience and in socialist education.

2) The centralization of the Party is very insufficient on many points. Democratic centralization does not function sufficiently well in the life of the Party:

   a) Committees often play the role of leadership in their domaine. Above all, the aid and control of the provincial regions are very much underdeveloped and they show it enormously in their stability and their development.

   b) Democratic discussion organized around a concrete problem of the times is badly conducted. The educational value of such a discussion is potentially enormous. It is in the course of these that one assimilates best the fundamental principles, for it is on the basis of these principles that they must be conducted.

3) The proletarian composition is getting better, the workers are affected by it in their section and can express it. But systematic efforts to penetrate the factories and the unions have not really taken place except in some places.

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The aid furnished to the workers of the factory by comrades, there not being much union activity, is not systematically organized. In the Paris region there is very little of it, but in the country, not only does it not generally exist, but above all the idea of concentrating all our efforts, if only upon a single enterprise, has not yet really penetrated. From which a lack of real activity follows, very prejudicial to the stability of the regions, and a lack of liaison with the worker milieu. On the contrary, in many provinces the R.P. (sic) is recruiting widely among the young workers and penetrating into the working class.

4) The answers to the national and international political questions which the working class is asking itself, are totally insufficient. They are insufficient in quality and quantity. By quality, we mean the level of our publications is not political enough; by quantity, we mean the absence of brochures, of public meetings, that is to say of material or of occasions permitting us to give our answers.

But it is certain that if the Party insufficiently publicizes its political plan, it is above all because it does not possess the propaganda material which will permit it to discuss and convince on the basis of our arguments.

That is to say that first we must expand politically, especially if we do not lose sight of the primary importance of such a political production in the actual situation. That is certainly the gravest weakness.

The change from propaganda work (which was essentially that of before the war) to as large a participation as possible in the struggles of the working class, that orientation vital for the future of our movement and of the working class, has given to all our members an experience of the conduct of the chosen battle. But this, seeing the reduced forces of the Party, has been obtained to the detriment of the theoretical work, systematically led not only on the problems directly posed by the struggle of the classes in France, but on all world problems. That is also pointed out by the absence of general analyses in our press and by insufficient efforts for the theoretical organ of the International.

On the other hand, while being directed towards work in the class, the Party, for reasons inherited from the past: long battles of internal rifts, errors committed in the relations between the work in depth and the broad agitation after the elections of 1946, shows a great hesitation to externalize concerning important events upon which the Party must take a stand politically. On the other hand, long-windedness carries with it an incapacity to understand that action is one of the elements essential to the Party in order that it may understand as a group the doctrine which it has decided to follow and in order that it may rectify its errors. There is still too much of a tendency in the Party to rack its brains seeking "the term" the most exact, forgetting that even a Party much more established than we are today, will commit many mistakes and that it is only in action that these can be eliminated.

5) The problem of cadres and leadership.

It is absolutely apparent that these criticisms do not mean that with a clear program of construction of the Party, our strengthening would have been unlimited. Naturally, neither a better education, for a better centralization, nor a more unified proletarian orientation, would have been able to perform miracles. Besides no one expects it. Neither our starting strength nor the situation in the working class would permit grandiose developments. But what would have been possible was an internal strengthening of the proletariat character of the Party greater than that which took place.

But in order to accomplish that, it would have been necessary to work relentlessly to select and form cadres, notably in the province. The two questions are tied to a greater firmness in the proletarization of the Party, which would have permitted the formation of cadres while following this line. Naturally, it would not have been possible to strengthen considerably the cadres of the Party in the space of a few months. But a first step could have been taken. However that may be, we must be aware of the necessity of methodically strengthening the encadrement of regions if they are to live.

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The thing of which the Party must be aware, and especially the leadership itself, is the weakness of the leadership.

The lack of possible progress in all fields is explained not by the external situation, but by the internal situation. We have not yet broken completely with the bad traditions of the past, our Party is not yet a Trotskyite workers' party and that above all, because the leadership has not shown sufficient strength to accomplish that orientation to which, without any doubt, the whole Party aspires. But it is precisely the role of the leadership to so lead that the ends may be attained.

How do these weaknesses show themselves?

It is the weakness of the leadership which must be blamed for all the lack of centralization, of education and discussion, and of externalization of the Party, and above all for the lack of political production, which must be the number one job of the leadership.

This weakness can be explained by diverse factors, but we must distinguish those which can only be changed over a long period and those which can be changed quite rapidly. There are some factors independent of our will and others which can be changed if we wish to:

1) Lack of liaison with the class, but that due to the weakness of the Party itself.

2) The leadership lacks theoretical indoctrination, and this is not undertaken as an indispensable task according to a plan.

<u>This can be modified in time if one wishes to do so:</u>

3) The authority of the leadership with respect to the collective body does not rest for its validity on long experience.

4) The functioning of the leadership is not stable and smooth enough.

5) These factors lead to insufficient coherence, lack of flexibility and homogeneity, between the Central Committee and the Political Bureau.

6) There is one factor which weighs the heaviest on the functioning of the group and the progress of the leadership. It is certainly, at the present stage, the one which is the greatest brake on the progress of the whole Party: this is the lack of professional revolutionaries.

The Party and its leaders cannot make progress, act in a disciplined fashion towards a set end according to a plan, if a team of professionals does not lead with continuity and firmness. This team must push the projects of the Party in all fields, in small as well as large details and this with sufficient time and continuity, that is to say as full-time work.

In our Party such as it is, this is still more indispensable because of the general lack of success in the past to overcome lack of organization and experience, and the non-existence of leaders of superior talents and incontestable authority. A team imbued with the wishes of the Party, devoting all its time to accomplishing them, must replace as a group such leaders and work with devotion for the political and organizational improvement of all the Party. Only such a team, doing the work of leadership, giving it time to educate itself, maintaining a smooth administrative pace, can permit the betterment of the stability, the cohesion, the smooth carrying out of the decisions of the leadership and of all the Party.

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Such a team of professionals does not yet exist. If one looks closely at the history of the Party during this past year one cannot fail to see that this is the gravest lack for the bolshevick transformation of the Party.

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To sum up, one can say: we have the means of advancing along the road towards a Bolshevick Party: the program, the worker basis, comrades capable of becoming cadres. What is lacking is a professional leadership systematically promoting education, orientation towards the trade unions and businesses, the formation of cadres, and the centralization of the smooth and disciplined action of the Party.

HOW TO USE OUR MEANS TO INCREASE OUR STRENGTH?

Whatever may be the types of work that the Party must use in building itself, one thing must be well anchored in the mind of each: if one has in view the construction of a really revolutionary party, a Trotskyite worker's party, capable of creating the militants necessary for the seizing of power, no miracle, no guile, no "playing on the crowds" can be hoped for. Patient, continuous, and systematic work alone can give results. The situation can change and we must be capable of turning rapidly in such and such a direction, but during these turnings, the application of methods capable of forming a party, cadres, and a Bolshevick leadership must be maintained.

Today, reading from the balance sheet, we must see what it is possible to do in order to best use our actual strength for at least partial accomplishment of the necessary tasks for increasing our force of attraction.

We have said that we must strengthen ourselves above all by trade union work, work with the youth, and a better political activity. But the latter is today the most necessary factor to forward our role in the crisis of Stalinism and on the other hand, the factor which is our principal weakness. By recognizing these facts we can start and see how to organize ourselves toward this end. We do not dwell on the fact that a rigorous application of the rules of organization is indispensable to succeed in these tasks and to strengthen us as a pole of attraction.

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