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NOVEMBER 1942

*Dialectics as an Aid to
Political Work*

*The Party of a New Type
Problems of Factory
Group Organisation*

THE COMMUNIST PARTY

279

ITS THEORY AND PRACTICE

A SERIES OF OUTLINES
FOR USE IN CLASSES

3rd

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IN using these outlines for classes, tutors are recommended to open the discussion with a very brief statement, which should not exceed ten minutes and should serve merely to turn the students' attention to the subject. This is followed by questions which the tutor asks the students to answer in their own way and from their own experience as far as possible.

The questions given in each outline should be only the starting point; when a student answers, the answer should be the basis for a question to another student, which should lead to the development, or, if necessary, correction, of the first answer. Thus each contribution should make the point clearer; and then the tutor should briefly sum up, bringing out the essential points, before passing on to the next main question.

To get the best value out of the class, the tutor must *control* the discussion, keeping it to the themes in the outline. If the students wish to raise other points, they should be noted and discussed separately at the end of the class.

Students should have copies of the outline, and should read it before the class, and, if possible, also the "essential reading"—which, in any case, should be read as soon as possible after the class. Suggestions for further reading will be found at the end.

Further Outlines in this series are in preparation.

The Outlines in No. 2 are: The International Front and National Front; The Labour Movement; Propaganda: Aims and Methods.

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Dialectics As an Aid to Political Work

Essential Reading: The basis of this discussion is Stalin's treatment of the dialectical method in *History of the C.P.S.U.(B)*, Chapter 4, pp. 106-111.

Opening of Discussion

THIS does not attempt to deal with the whole question of Dialectical Materialism, but only with the dialectical *method* and how this can help us in our political work.

Everything in the world and in human society can only be understood if we look at it from the following points of view:

1. **To understand anything we must pay attention to the circumstances in which it happens.**

Use an example, such as: Pacifist says *all* wars are wrong. Jingo says *all* wars are right. Communists say, examine the circumstances and then decide whether just or unjust.

2. **Everything is constantly changing; developing and dying away. Therefore, unless we always consider things not only as they are today, but as they were yesterday and will be tomorrow, we shall make mistakes.**

Example: Capitalism has not always existed. It is only one period in a long process of development; and since it had a beginning it will have an end.

3. **The development goes slowly for a time, then there is a sharp change which completely alters the character of a thing.**

Example: Class struggle in capitalist society; the slow development of working-class organisation and active struggle; then the taking of power by the workers and the

beginning of a new slow development to full socialist society.

4. The cause of all development is the conflict between opposing tendencies. The break occurs when one gains the victory over the other.

Example: As above.

These four principles are true of everything in nature and human society. The fact that Communists are *conscious* of them enables them to apply the principles to all our experience in the class struggle. It enables us to see things *as they really are*, not as we would like them to be, and so to reach a correct policy of action, consistently helping forward the progressive tendency and fighting against the reactionary tendency. We should always be looking for what is new and developing, even if at the time it is weaker than the old.

Questions for Discussion

(A) Character and Development of the War

What kind of war was this when it began in September, 1939? (Imperialist, unjust). What other kinds of war are there? (Work at this till you get People's War for National Liberation; just war). Has the war changed its character? Before June 22, 1941, was there any element of people's struggle for liberation in it? (Show how each Nazi conquest leaves the *people* of each country facing the Nazis: and then how the people of Yugoslavia changed their Government in order to resist the Nazis. By further questions bring out how the element of people's struggle was continually developing *within the imperialist war*, but became the *dominant factor* only after June 22).

What was working-class policy during this period? (Soviet Union goes to assistance of Polish people; Bessarabia; offers mutual assistance pact to Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. In Britain the Communist Party works for People's Government to make alliance with the Soviet Union and conduct the war against Hitler as a war of liberation. Bring out that working class, under Communist Party leadership, does not sit passively watching the dialectical process but actively assists it.)

After June 22, 1941, when the war changed definitely from imperialist to war of liberation, why is it still necessary to fight

against imperialist tendencies within the Allies? (Because imperialist tendencies prevent the strengthening of the national and international front; we must therefore fight to drive out Munichite and appeasement elements from leading positions; for a National Government for India; for a unified Allied strategy, etc.).

(B) Character and Changes in Governments

What kind of Government in Spain in July, 1936? (Republican, no Socialist or Communist in it, but backed by People's Front parties). How did the Government change in the course of the Spanish struggle? (First Socialists included then Left-Wing Socialists; and only much later Communists, thus becoming a true People's Front Government. Bring out here how changes reflect working-class struggle for real war against fascism, the result of *conscious action* by proletariat led by Communist Party). What parallels are there in the changes of British Government since June, 1941?

(C) Character and Development of Strikes

Strikes are a working-class weapon; are they right today? Why not? Are they right today anywhere? (Yes, in Germany, etc. Bring out importance of *circumstances*). Were they always right in Britain before June, 1941? (Only so long as they assisted working-class struggle, organisation and consciousness). If a strike before the war began as a good strike, useful to the working class, could it become harmful? (Good so long as it develops and expands; harmful if it weakens and begins to disorganise the workers).

(D) Development of Organisations

Ask for the experience of comrades who have worked (a) as only Communist in a factory; (b) as one of several, but with no Group; (c) as one of a Group? Ask for experiences of comrade who has experienced the starting of a Group? (By such questions show that *quantitative change*—a larger number of Communists working in a factory—affects the *character and influence* of their work because it brings about a *qualitative change*—from a number of Communists to a factory group, radically altering the kind of work they do and its effect; and new qualitative changes when numbers increase further (cover-

ing all Departments, Shop Stewards, etc.). Show also the growth of the Group results from *struggle within factory*.)

(E) Character and Development of Individuals

Ask for the experience of comrades in winning members for the Party by systematic work over a period. (Show how the struggle against bourgeois tendencies within individuals goes on gradually over a period and how the step of joining the Party is a "revolutionary break" for them. Go on to show how, after this, the process of becoming a Bolshevik has to begin and develop with the aid of the Party. Compare with development of "new Socialist People" in Soviet Union over period of 1917 to Stalin Constitution. Bring out point that actual participation in the class struggle is of vital importance.)

(F) Campaigns

Here it is a question of bringing out the stages in development of a campaign, say in a factory or borough; follow up to show that unless the campaign is developing it is bound to be dying away, and show the absolute need to follow up each climax—for example, a big demonstration—with a new form of activity on a higher level *because of the success of the demonstration*.

(G) The Fight for Unity

The points under this head are very similar to the preceding; the essence is to show the slow, patient work and building up which is essential; the sharp change that will occur if our work is good; the need to see the development of action by the Labour organisations themselves as an essential condition for winning unity.

The Party of a New Type

Essential Reading: Stalin's Foundations of Leninism,
Chapters 1, 2, 3, 8 and 9

Opening of Discussion

SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC parties developed in Europe in the last quarter of the 19th century, when capitalism was still expanding. Their main job was to fight for the legal, democratic rights of the workers—the extension of the vote, the

right to organise in trade unions, the shorter working day, etc. They were therefore parliamentary in outlook and in organisation, and as capitalism was still developing they were able to force concessions, "reforms" within capitalism. They played an extremely important part in the development of *class* consciousness, mobilising the workers as a whole for their *class* interests, and advancing the general idea of Socialism as against capitalism.

Special feature in Britain: trade unions on a craft basis had developed much earlier than in other countries, and the fight for the reduction of hours, factory legislation, extension of the vote, and trade union rights was carried on by the trade unions themselves, united for these purposes in the Trades Union Congress. At a time when the German Social Democrats had won over a hundred seats in the German Parliament, in Britain the few working-class representatives were elected as Liberals. It was not until 1900 that the *Labour Party* took shape, and even then as a joint organisation of the Trade Unions (which dominated it) and small Socialist societies.

Both on the continent and in Britain, the parliamentary outlook continued to dominate both the organisation (constituency and ward basis) and the work (electoral activity, with little life between elections) of the Social Democratic and Labour Parties after 1900. But by then the general expansion of capitalism had been checked; the world was practically divided up among the great powers; further capitalist expansion could take place only by means of war for a new division of the world, while economic crises were deeper and more frequent than at earlier stages. There was no way out for the workers except by taking power from the capitalists, and this required the building up of working-class strength and activity for the direct struggle against capitalism.

This could not be done by Social Democratic and Labour Parties of the old type, with their parliamentary forms of organisation and work, and their outlook that capitalism could be reformed by legislation. A Party of a new type was required—one that organised the great mass of the workers for the continuous struggle in the factories and the streets as well as at elections, and would be able to lead the working class forward to the taking of power from the capitalists, and the setting up of a working-class State. Such a Party was first

built by Lenin in Russia; after 1919, a Communist Party began to be built in all capitalist countries, and all are united in the Communist International.

The Communist Party in each country had to be built up against the opposition of the leaders of the old parties, who followed a policy of alliance with the imperialists of their own country, and did all they could to prevent any challenge to the existing system.

The Communist Party is not an alternative to other forms of working-class organisation, but works with all other working-class organisations which have more limited aims but are essential for the defence of working-class interests.

Questions for Discussion

1. Lenin speaks of the Party as the *vanguard* of the working class: what is a vanguard? Does the vanguard do all the fighting by itself? (No, it takes the shocks, but never isolates itself from the main body—if it does, it is cut off and destroyed, and the main body probably retreats instead of advancing). Follow up with other questions to bring out that the idea of *leading* the workers implies that the workers are *following*; try to get examples from the current work of a branch or group, showing that if the workers do not follow, the “leadership” is bad, the Party is not really acting as a vanguard.

In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels said that Communists are “the most advanced and resolute section,” and “clearly understand the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results” of the class struggle. Is every Communist Party member more advanced and resolute than other workers? (No; but the Communist Party as a whole, because it bases its outlook on Marxism, is more advanced and resolute than any other section of the working class; and it constantly strives to bring into its ranks the best of the working-class fighters). Does every Communist Party member clearly understand “the line of march,” etc.? (No; but the Communist Party as a whole understands it much better than any other section; and it is constantly striving to give that understanding to its members, by political education, by discussion on policy, and in the course of carrying out policy).

2. Lenin speaks of the Party as an *organised detachment* of

the working class; what does “organised” mean? (Not only holding a card, but acting in an organised way—that is, making collective decisions, and each member acting in accordance with those decisions). Are trade union members organised in this sense? (Yes, for trade union purposes; for example, they are members of a branch, and are expected to carry out its decisions). Are Labour Party members organised in this way? (No; they can be members by paying the political levy, or by taking out a card as an individual member; but they are not expected to carry out *organised work*, and very few of them do). What is expected from members of the Communist Party? (Acceptance of Party programme; payment of dues; must belong to and work in a definite group of the Party).

3. Lenin speaks of the Communist Party as “the highest of all forms of organisation” of the working class, which must *guide* all the other working-class organisations. In what sense is the Party the *highest* form of working-class organisation? (Trade unions, co-operatives, etc., have a limited, sectional aim; the Communist Party has the aim of uniting all the limited, sectional interests into a single *class* aim). What exactly do we mean by “guiding” the trade unions and co-operatives? (Not dictating to them, but putting forward our policy, and trying to convince them that the policy we put forward is one which they should adopt, because it is in the interests of the working class as a whole). Ask further questions to bring out the point that, for example, engineers *from their sectional standpoint* may resist dilution, but can be convinced that dilution is necessary from the standpoint of the *working class* struggle against fascism.

4. Lenin says that the Party must be closely linked with the masses: what does this mean in practice? (Communist Party members must be members of trade unions, co-operatives, etc.; they must be “wherever the masses are to be found”). Is it enough to hold a trade union card? (No; whatever the organisation, the Communist member must work actively for the objects of that organisation—must attend meetings, be prepared to act as delegate if required, to take official posts in it, and strengthen it in every way). Why is this necessary? (If the working class is to act together, it must be organised, even though for limited purposes; the guidance for united class action must be given by the Communist Party, with its members

in every organisation, known to the other members of the organisation as active workers on behalf of their interests).

5. Lenin says that in order to work properly, the Party must be centralised, and at the same time must be democratic. What does centralised mean? (Led by the Central Committee, the District Committee, the Branch Committee, the Group leadership—the decisions of each higher committee having to be carried out by the lower committees and the membership). Is this contrary to British working-class practice? (On the contrary, every trade union is built up on this principle). What does democratic mean as applied to the Party? (Central Committee elected by Congress of delegates from the whole Party; District Committee by District Congress, and so on. But also: all policy decisions discussed throughout the Party, so that the “discipline” of having to carry out decisions of leading committees really means discipline that comes from conviction that the policy is correct). How is policy, for example, on some industrial question, decided by the leading committees? (It is discussed by those directly concerned—such as miners, on the coal position—and proposals are drafted. These proposals are then considered by the leadership of the Party as a whole, whose job it is to ensure that the proposals are in line with the interests of the whole working class, and not sectional in the interests of the miners only).

6. In order to work properly, individual members of the Party must carry out the Party's policy, even if they have voted against it when it was discussed. Is this contrary to British working-class practice? (No; after a vote has been taken, the decision of the majority is binding on the minority—if a decision to strike is taken, even those who voted against it are expected to carry it out). Why do the reactionaries attack Communist discipline? (Because they do not like the idea of having to carry out discipline themselves; they apply discipline only to people who do not agree with their line—for example, the expulsion of Cripps and Pritt for advocating the People's Front and Alliance with Russia).

What is the duty of a Communist Party member who does not agree with a decision? (To carry out the decision; but at the same time to state his reasons against it, to discuss the question with the appropriate Group leadership or committee, and to try to get agreement, either by his reaching understand-

ing that the decision was correct, or by convincing the others that the decision should be reversed or modified).

What is the duty of the Group leadership or committee to a comrade who opposes a decision? (To make the most careful efforts to convince the comrade; but also, if a particular comrade is constantly in disagreement with policy, to remove that comrade from responsible positions; and to ensure that the comrade does not build up a faction that supports his point of view—any necessary discussion must take place in the ordinary Party meetings, not in factions got together by the comrade).

Is expulsion necessary in certain cases? (Not simply for failure to understand the Party's policy—but only where the comrade builds up a faction within the Party against the Party's policy; or where the comrade is putting forward the views of anti-working-class elements with whom he is in touch, such as the Trotskyists; or where the personal behaviour of a comrade persistently brings discredit on the Party. Every comrade has the right of appeal).

These are the main points in Lenin's idea of “The Party of a New Type” which the working class had to develop. Can such a Party be a mass Party? What do we mean by a mass Party? (A Party that is big enough to have members in every area, in every important factory, in every department, in fact everywhere among the people; and not only members, but *organisations* of members, so that they can work collectively to influence the whole of the workers; and not only among the workers, but among all sections of the anti-fascist people, so that all can be mobilised for the struggle against fascism).

Problems of Factory Group Organisation

Opening of Discussion

THE decisive strength of the working class is in the factories, at the point of production. The factory group is the

principal unit of organisation of our Party; it is directly responsible for winning the workers in that factory for Party policy; but it must also play its part in winning the workers of the whole town or district round it. The group should be the driving force in raising the class consciousness of the workers round it, developing their political education, their organisation (trade union, shop stewards, etc.), and their capacity for initiative, action and struggle, so that from the factory they are drawn into the struggle of the working class as a whole. While always striving to organise defence of the workers' economic interests, today our Factory Groups bear main responsibility for organising *the fight against fascism*, the main enemy. Political understanding is the only basis for success in this.

Questions for Discussion

1. The Factory Group as the Basic Unit of the Party

What is a Factory Group? (All Party members in a given place of work, working as an *organised, collective* leadership). Why is Factory Group the basic unit? (Because decisive strength of working class is in factories, at the point of production).

What is the main job of the Factory Group? (To give political leadership to all the workers in the factory). Sum up this section by asking how to set about building Factory Groups and bringing out following points: (1) Find out names of all Party members in factories but *not* organised in Factory Group. (2) Arranging for transfer of comrades from one factory to another. (3) Persuade women comrades to seek work in key factories. (4) Make contacts through Trade Union Branches. (5) Find contacts in industry through propaganda work of Branch and Area Groups. (6) Factory gate literature sales and meetings. (7) Selective meetings. Then make full and careful preparation for first Group meeting, and at once arrange educational classes for new members.

2. Factory Groups and Trade Union

What is the distinctive role of the Factory Group on the one hand and the Trade Union organisation on the other? (There will almost certainly be much discussion on this. Therefore break the question down further, *e.g.*, Who is organised by the Trade Union and what for?) (*All* workers in one field

of work, for *mainly* economic aims, but different trade unions for different sections of workers). What, then, is role of Factory Group? (Includes defence of workers' immediate interests, but main aim is to develop consciousness of class interests, and bring workers into action for these. Factory Group unites *all sections* of workers in common political campaigns). What are some of main mistakes? (Too large a proportion of Factory Group membership put to staff shop stewards' committees and Trade Union generally. Failure to allocate comrades to staff Factory Group itself and Party Branch Committee. Failure to develop non-Party forces for Trade Union work).

3. Organisation and Plan of Work

Must always have in mind collective organisation and team work. How do we ensure this? (Group leader, the most politically able comrade, having the confidence of the workers as a whole. Working closely with him, a number of leading comrades responsible for *special* activities: shop stewards, Trade Union, propaganda, literature, education, etc.). How do they lead the Group? (By continuous explanation and working out of Party's policy at regular weekly Group meetings. See next section). How is the Party line carried to the factory as a whole? (By direct propaganda, support for National Front against fascism, opening of Second Front, etc.; and also through Trade Union channels, to get increased production and efficiency. Both aspects of same task). How does Factory Group carry on direct propaganda? (Leaflets, discussion, literature sales, meetings. Also aim to persuade shop stewards' committee to call mass meetings and issue propaganda to workers). The Factory Group is responsible for political education (a) of Party members, (b) of workers as a whole. How does it carry out these tasks?

Development of Factory Group organisation. Why, to begin with, is one Group best? (Need to find capable leaders; concentration on initial objectives). How decide when the time is ripe to form departmental groups? (Not mechanically, but when splitting will lead to greater efficiency; when quality of leadership is strong enough to stand division, according to strength of Factory Group in proportion to size of factory; according to the way members are distributed). How big should departmental Groups be? (No hard and fast rule). Are separate women's Groups advisable?—Why not?—What is main

danger of departmental Groups? (Lack of strong central leadership. Therefore an *aggregate* meeting should be held roughly once a month and small centralised leadership elected to take day-to-day decisions and give rapid leads).

4. The Group Meetings

What experience has your group had of group meetings? (Some points to bring out by further questions, on the basis of first reply: (1) need to consider convenience of comrades—time and place of meeting; make it short and business-like, with definite time of closing; vary times if necessary to suit shifts; (2) main purpose of every meeting should be political enlightenment, not only on the general situation, but the application of Party policy to that factory; (3) detailed business such as dues payment, literature, etc., should not take place at the group meeting, but should be done at other times through dues collectors, literature organiser, etc.; (4) sometimes part of the meeting can be given to formal political education, on a definite syllabus; (5) it is correct to discuss the application of Party policy to the factory, but not correct to allow discussion to go into details which should be the concern of the Trade Union Branch, Shop Stewards' Committee or other body).

5. Factory Group and Party Branch

Why is it necessary for comrades from factory groups to be on the Party Branch Committee? (Strengthening of Party Branch leadership; strengthening of factory group through broader outlook, seeing wider struggle of working class, and helping to prevent narrow industrial outlook). In what ways can the factory group help with the development of the Party's work outside the factory? (To bring out particularly the points: (1) helping to win Trade Union Branches, Trades Councils and Labour Parties for our general policy, also for concrete action in connection with local campaigns; (2) raising and helping to campaign on such points as trade union organisation in local factories, the provision of day nurseries, British restaurants, better transport facilities, etc.; (3) helping to recruit to the Party from other factories, etc.).

Sum up whole discussion by stressing that the factory group is a part of the Communist Party; it is a political group working for the aims of the working class as a whole, and not simply a "ginger group" among the workers in the factory.

SOME other pamphlets and books which will be of special interest to those who have been through this syllabus are:—

DIALECTICS

The whole of Chapter 4, section 2, of the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks)*, pp. 105-131, dealing with Dialectical and Historical Materialism. (This is also published separately as Little Stalin Library, No. 4.)

Dialectical Materialism, by David Guest (Lawrence & Wishart, 2s.).

Anti-Dühring, by F. Engels (Lawrence & Wishart, 5s.), chapters covering Morality and Law: Eternal Truths; Equality; Freedom and Necessity; and Dialectics: Quantity and Quality; Negation of the Negation. (Some extracts from these chapters are contained in *A Handbook of Marxism*, pp. 240-266.)

THE PARTY OF A NEW TYPE

What is to be done? By V. I. Lenin (Lawrence & Wishart, 2s.).

"Left Wing" Communism: An Infantile Disorder, by V. I. Lenin (Lawrence & Wishart, 9d.).

History of the C.P.S.U.(B), Conclusion.

THE WORK OF A FACTORY GROUP

The Way to Win (Report of National Conference of the C.P.G.B., May, 1942). Harry Pollitt's speech, pp. 15-20, 53-55.

Britain in the World Front, by R. Palme Dutt (Lawrence & Wishart, 5s.), chapters vii, ix, xii.