

***BUILD THE  
COMMUNIST  
PARTY***

**THE PARTY OF THE  
WORKING CLASS**

**HENRY WINSTON**

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# *Build the Communist Party*

THE PARTY OF THE WORKING CLASS

*By HENRY WINSTON*

Report to the 19th National Convention,  
Communist Party, U.S.A., April 30-May 4, 1969

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NEW OUTLOOK PUBLISHERS: *New York*

1969

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mississippi-born Henry Winston is only two generations from slavery. His grandfather was a slave.

At 19, Winston joined the Young Communist League and plunged into the struggles of the unemployed in his home state and also participated in the National Hunger March to Washington, D. C. in 1932 for unemployment insurance and relief. He aided the defense of the Scottsboro Boys, took part in the National Negro Congress and in the Southern Conference for Human Welfare.

Winston served in World War II for three years and eight months and received an honorable discharge. Soon after, he was indicted and tried under the infamous Smith Act and in 1956 began an 8-year prison sentence which was finally, after worldwide protest, commuted by President Kennedy for "reasons of health" after Winston had served nearly six years and had lost his sight due to brutal negligence of the prison authorities.

At the 18th National Convention of the Communist Party, in June 1966, he was elected to the post of National Chairman. He was again elected to this post at the 19th National Convention in April-May 1969.

He is the author of numerous articles and pamphlets among which are *Life Begins with Freedom; Character Building and Education in the Spirit of Socialism; What It Means to Be a Communist; New Colonialism: U.S. Style* and *Negro-White Unity*.

This pamphlet contains the text of his report to the 19th National Convention of the CPUSA, presented on May 1, 1969.

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*Published by*

**NEW OUTLOOK PUBLISHERS**

32 Union Square East • Room 801 • New York, N. Y. 10003

June, 1969

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

## ***On the Report of Comrade Gus Hall***

Comrades, I have been in the Communist Party for many a year. But I have never heard a general secretary deliver a report of such profundity and brilliance—a report which so deeply analyzes the period we are now going through and charts a mass course of struggle for the future, which is so much bound to strengthen the ties of our Party with organized and unorganized masses from one end of the country to the other. It was not for nothing that the report of Comrade Hall was received with such enthusiasm.\* And what a pleasure it was to see comrades, one after the other, from this shop and that shop, from this field of struggle, from that campus, get up and express their agreement with the direction of that report.

What was that report? It was a registration of the will, of the thinking of the overwhelming bulk of our Party membership. Here we saw in action the operation of that principle upon which our Party is built—the principle of democratic centralism.

The Party issued a draft resolution. This resolution was discussed hundreds and hundreds of times in Party clubs, in section committees, in district committees, in commissions, in the national committee, the national board and the national secretariat. And that report singled out the main conclusions which resulted from that discussion. We are gratified and thankful for the participation of the membership in helping to produce such a result, in helping to provide that guide which alone can strengthen our Party as an organization.

This does not mean, however, that all Party members and organizations pulled their weight in such a way that this draft resolution was joined with a critical and self-critical examination of the work in the particular districts. In that sense there was

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\* Gus Hall, *On Course: The Revolutionary Process*. Report to the 19th National Convention, CPUSA. New Outlook Publishers, New York, 1969.

a weakness in the application of the principle of democratic centralism, a failure to contribute to the unification and strengthening of the Party. Perhaps if those districts *had* reviewed their work in the light of the resolution, *had* brought together their experiences and tested them on the basis of this document, we would be even stronger than we are at present. I think, however, that a check in those areas in which such conclusions were not drawn will in the end correspond with the conclusions of Comrade Hall's report which, I am sure, will be extremely valuable in finalizing the draft resolution that has been put before the Party.

### ***Between the 18th and 19th Conventions***

Comrades, it is necessary that we say a few things about our past, about the 18th National Convention and the period since that Convention. What is the main thing which must be said about this period? It is that the basic line adopted at the 18th National Convention represented a high point in our struggle to overcome revisionism and its ravages, and that it played a major role in preparing the Party to tackle the problems which existed at that time and which were bound to grow. And it did so on the basis of a generally correct line. In the words of the draft resolution:

The Convention correctly assessed the unfolding mass democratic movement among the American people and the process of radicalization taking place within the upsurge. It took note of the emergence of a new mass political consciousness offering new challenges to imperialism. It geared the work of the Party to these historic developments and laid the groundwork for the increasing involvement of the Party in the momentous struggles now in progress.

The Convention rightly placed primary emphasis on the centrality of the struggle of black America for equality and freedom. It took note of the new stage of the struggle for economic, political and social equality—a stage which brings to the fore direct confrontation with the monopolist roots of the whole system of black oppression. It stressed the

fight for the Negro-labor alliance as an historic necessity.

The Convention also took note of the new stirring within the working class and the trade union movement, of the growth of rank-and-file movements, of a new rise of struggle possessing immense potentialities. It stressed the need in the Party's work for top priority to working-class concentration. . . .

In general, life has sustained the correctness of the conclusions reached by the 18th Convention and the path it charted. The crisis of U.S. imperialism has deepened. It is being forced to retreat in Vietnam. The struggles of the working class, of the Negro people, of the youth are growing in scope and intensity. At the same time the forces of racism and fascism have stepped up their efforts. The struggle is sharpening and the pace of radicalization is growing.

But we Communists are among the first to look at our work self-critically, and we are guided by that single law which determines the Party's growth—the law of criticism and self-criticism.

If we say that our basic line was correct, how then can we explain a situation in which, at the same Convention, we put such a question as doubling the membership of the Party by the time of the present Convention? Did we double our membership in this period? Of course not. We failed in that objective. Did we increase our membership in this period? Yes, but only slightly. The basic question we must put and discuss is whether the goals set at the 18th Convention were realistic goals.

In an objective sense, in terms of the situation in the country, one may say of course they were. But when one considers the status of the Party at the moment when this projection was made, the answer is that such goals were not realistic. And why weren't they realistic? The reason was an underestimation of the depth of the crisis in which our Party found itself at the time of the 18th Convention.

Let me speak frankly, comrades. The organizational status of our Party at that time was nearly non-existent in basic industry throughout the country. The Party organization was practically

non-existent in the South. A youth organization and a youth cadre were almost completely lacking. The Party as an organization within the communities was extremely weak. There was a complete breakdown in Party structure, an atomization of Party organization. There did not exist in those days a daily newspaper. Therefore the mammoth task outlined was undertaken, in the main, not through an organized system of Party structures but through individuals.

What was it that had brought our Party to this state? It stemmed from two main facts. The first was the tremendous wave of anti-Communism within the country. Tremendous pressures were exerted from the Right and from the Left, pressures which served only one master and one aim—the ruling circles of our country which were hell-bent on curbing our role in relation to the masses. Secondly, it was also the result of the wreckage produced by revisionism, which undertook to destroy the Party from within.

What happened between the 18th and 19th Conventions? While the membership of the Party was not doubled, there was some increase, and this came about because of the struggle for the Party. There was a struggle in which comrades understood very well that the future of our class and our people depends upon building this Party. There was a restoration of club organizations as a form, as part of a system of Party organization. These club forms existed not only in the communities but, most important, there was a building of shop and industrial clubs in the basic industry of the country. We can now speak of hundreds of clubs from one end of the country to the other. Secondly, because of these developments a system of leadership was established in which the effort was made to guarantee the continuing involvement of the leadership in the solution of problems within the districts. Of this we shall speak later.

Furthermore, what was only a dream at the 18th Convention became a living reality in the period under review. Namely, after some twelve years of non-existence there came back into being a

daily Marxist-Leninist newspaper. This is an achievement of no mean proportions, because this is an organ which can speak to masses when we are not there. This is an organ which people can read and study in their homes in the evenings. This is an organ which workers can take into the shops, the unions, the ghettos, the projects in which they live.

### ***Masses Are on the Move***

What can be said is that we succeeded in laying the foundation for building a mass Communist Party in the United States. And this was done under circumstances in which growing struggles are taking place all around us. There exist spontaneous struggles; there exist organized movements. But no phase of American life is unaffected by the bursting struggles that are taking place. Objectively, these are directed against the government policy of genocidal war in Vietnam, against the hostile imperialist policy toward the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America, and against the hostility toward socialist Cuba. They are in opposition to the policy of hostile acts against the great land of socialism—the Soviet Union—and against the entire socialist community.

To carry out such policies tremendous armaments are built, with armaments expenditures growing year by year, billion by billion. And the cost is placed on the backs of the common men and women of this country. It is not the rich who pay for this; it is the poor. Rising taxes and prices and the deterioration which takes place in every phase of American life are borne by the working class, black and white, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Indians.

The Nixon Administration has stepped up the whole process. While it plays at negotiating in Paris the war in Vietnam goes on and military expenditures continue to go up. In the name of "fighting inflation" it seeks to cut deeper into workers' living standards. Spending for social welfare, education, health is being cut to the bone, while poverty and hunger mount. But with this the struggles also mount, despite the growing threats of violence



under the guise of "law and order."

Today masses are on the move, more and more questioning the existing order, and the forces of capitalist reaction will not stop them. I am reminded of what Lenin wrote in *"Left-Wing" Communism*:

Communism "springs" from positively all sides of public life; its shoots are to be seen literally everywhere. The "contagion" (to use a favorite metaphor of the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois police, the one most "pleasant" to them) has very thoroughly permeated the organism and has completely impregnated it. If one of the channels is "stopped up" with special care, the "contagion" will find another, sometimes a very unexpected one. Life will assert itself. Let the bourgeoisie rave, work itself into a frenzy, go to extremes, commit follies, take vengeance on the Bolsheviks in advance and endeavor to kill off (in India, Hungary, Germany, etc.) hundreds, thousands, and hundreds of thousands more of yesterday's and tomorrow's Bolsheviks. In acting thus, the bourgeoisie is acting as all classes doomed by history have acted. Communists should know that the future in any case belongs to them. Therefore, we can (and must) combine the most intense passion in the great revolutionary struggle with the coolest and most sober estimation of the frenzied ravings of the bourgeoisie. (V.I. Lenin, *"Left-Wing" Communism, an Infantile Disorder*, International Publishers, New York, 1940, pp. 81-82.)

In periods of storm many things develop—among some, steadfastness, courage, steeliness in battle. They are guided single-mindedly by the principles of Marxism-Leninism, seeking a way out of the present situation. But there are others who become faint-hearted, who waver, who have doubts when the struggle gets hard, when the pressure becomes stronger and stronger. But that is why we need a Party all the more.

We are, comrades, not going into a period of ease. That is not what is before us. We are entering into a period of sharp class battles in which the clash between the classes, of the people against monopoly, will reveal itself more and more. The storm

signals are presently with us.

### ***The Decisive Task***

What to do under such circumstances when our Party is small? The task is certainly not to be a fire brigade, running here and running there. That will not help the mass movement, nor will it help the Party.

What, then is the task? Comrade Hall, in his report, put it most brilliantly. It is to find that link in the chain without which it is inconceivable that a lasting, fighting movement against Wall Street, against monopoly capital, against the Nixon Administration, can be developed in this country. And what does Comrade Hall single out? The task of building our Party among the decisive sections of the working class. The task of building our Party in such a way that one understands the need of the unity of the class on the basis of a fighting policy, beginning at the point of production. The task of anchoring the Party in that stratum which can produce that cadre capable of understanding its class responsibility by beginning to recognize its relationship with the black workers, by fighting to join with, to broaden, deepen and develop greater consciousness within the people's movements.

To organize and anchor itself in the basic industries, with the working class as its pivot, a party must understand that it must also rally support to the fighting students, black and white. It must be a party which gives support to any and all social struggles in defense of the vital interests of our people. The motor force in our history is centered in our class—in the working class. And our Party is a class organization, the highest form of class organization, which must help this class to feel its responsibility to itself and to the people in general.

This is how we have to understand the projection of the mass policies which Comrade Hall has laid down for us. But, as you know, mass policies have meaning only when there is a fight to implement them. I said that the experiences between the 18th

and 19th Conventions indicated a growth of Party membership within industry. Well, there can be a more rapid growth if we draw certain conclusions. Among them is the need to structure our leadership so as more rapidly to bring about changes within the labor movement. We must be able to help stimulate the developments among the rank and file, the fight for greater democracy in the unions, the advancement of the fight against racism in the shops, the special fight for the rights of women in the shops. We must be able to help fight for and give full expression in every way to equality for black workers, for youth, for women.

Clearly, we are not fully prepared structurally to bring about such changes. What did Comrade Hall mean when he gave such an orientation to our Party, to our leadership? It was a call for a rapid reorganization of our system of leadership. It was a call for a leadership so structurally designed that we can give operative leadership to bringing about a rapid and basic change in the Party membership and in the rank-and-file movement within organized labor, and more than that, to help promote the fight to organize the unorganized, North and South.

The present structure of our leadership, originally set up at the 18th Convention, was designed to achieve this, or at least to move in this direction. Experience shows that this structure did not suffice to get closer to the membership. Therefore we propose a revision in this structure, so that there will no longer be some three bodies which take up time in inner meetings, in producing paper after paper and document after document, and which tie us up in too much administrative work rather than releasing our full energies for the solution of basic tasks in the mass movement and building the Party in the basic industries and the ghettos of our land. Such an organizational change would be an important contribution to revamping our style of leadership, to producing a leadership which would more fully express a Leninist style of work.

Secondly, the proposal involves the establishment of commissions, which have the task of mastering all problems within

their given fields, of becoming acquainted with those problems and being on top of them. These commissions have the task of putting on their agendas specific and organizational questions, of developing regular checkup and control on the fulfillment of decisions as they are applicable to the given field of work. It means keeping minutes of every single commission meeting. It means opening the commission meetings with the reading of the minutes, a simple trade union practice. It means that these minutes are read for the purpose of checkup. These commissions are arms of the Party. They help prepare, most thoroughly and most clearly, questions for presentation and action by the Party as a whole. They are not independent institutions.

Now, in regard to these commissions some progress was made, but not enough for us to say that they function satisfactorily. There is the necessity of qualitatively improving the work of the commissions and directing them along the lines determined by this 19th Convention.

Furthermore, the leadership must have an intimate, daily relationship with the districts, with priorities given to the concentration districts. It must be a relationship which guarantees that the specific concentration industries for the districts have been decided upon, that the work of the Party in respect to these industries is constantly reviewed and checked upon, and that every single member of our leading committees is responsible for a given industry. I am happy to say that the Illinois District, the Midwest region and Comrade Jim West have already begun to put such an approach into effect.

I sat in this hall yesterday and listened to the delegates from Washington. I noted how they undertook to examine their work most critically and drew some basic conclusions, and how they are making a contribution to this Convention by their emphasis on new standards. I hope that I will have the opportunity to spend some time in Washington. There is much to learn which must be transmitted to the entire Party.

## *An Open Letter*

If we fully understand the report of Comrade Hall and if, as I am certain we will, we agree to fight for the implementation of such a report—to make that report the policy of hundreds of thousands— this will be an initiative such as has not been taken by any other organization of social action in this country. And so, if we agree, I should like to propose that this Convention issue an open letter to the whole Party, calling for a complete restructuring of its leadership and its style of work. I propose the following text:

### AN OPEN LETTER TO THE PARTY FROM THE 19th CONVENTION, CPUSA

Dear Comrades:

Greetings!

On this May Day, in the 50th year of our Party, the 19th Convention calls upon you to rally in unity and struggle to decisively build the Party among the workers, black and white, in the basic, trustified industries of our country.

We are in a period of struggles which are escalating into the proportions of a storm. Such can be the only response of the working class, the black liberation movement, the peace and student movements, to the tremendously intensified exploitation and attacks of the ruling class. Such can be the only response to the Nixon Administration policies.

Increasingly, the struggles for black liberation, for peace, for student rights, for the rights of all the oppressed, tend to align themselves with the class struggle. The class struggle itself has become sharper. Strikes, many of them long and bitter, have become so commonplace that the capitalist mass media deliberately fail to report them or downplay them. The strike wave attains record dimensions in the face of the unprecedented concentration of the whole state apparatus, the mass media and the ideological agents of imperialism, in and out of the labor movement, to immobilize and demobilize the working class.

The fires of these struggles, in these conditions, serve to

temper and radicalize the working class at a vastly accelerated tempo. We live in times in which class and revolutionary consciousness can mature in days and weeks where it would take months and years in so-called "normal times." Nowadays workers are learning quickly the need for organization and are fighting for it. Communist initiatives which stand four square on class struggle policies can help to develop left movements, can help shape and direct spontaneous movements into proper channels of struggle against oppression. We live in times in which the Communist Party can and must be built quickly in the work shops of our country. We live in times in which the rapid growth of the Party in industry is the most important imperative before us. For without this, the full potential of mighty movements now developing, cannot and will not become movements of struggle against monopoly. Without this, the full potential of the black liberation movement, of the peace and student movements, and all other movements against monopoly domination will not emerge united into a powerful stream of working class and people's struggle for social advancement.

Imagine if there were a strong and influential Communist Party in the steel, auto, aircraft, electronics, transport and other basic industries, uniting black and white, Puerto Rican, Chicano and Indian workers. This would immediately bring about a decisive, qualitative change in the prospects for victory in the major tasks confronting our class and people today.

In the 1930's, the organization of the basic trustified industries could not be done without the unity of black and white. This in turn, could not be done without the decisive role of the Communist Party, especially at the point of production and in the working class communities. Today, the unrelenting struggle against racism and the fight for unity of black and white must be approached to include other oppressed sections of the working class, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Indian, to extend the struggle on a new and more advanced level — the level of a general offensive for equality and dignity on the whole front. This cannot be won without the decisive role of the Communist Party among the basic industrial workers.

For it is from here that the revolutionary leadership can

and will come which can unite the class struggle with the struggles for black liberation, for peace, for women's emancipation, for the rights of the young generation, for the rights of the Puerto Rican, Chicano, Indian and other oppressed minorities into a general assault on the citadel of monopoly capital, the common oppressor and enemy of all.

It is from here that the resources and energies can and will come to complete the task of organizing the unorganized, and first of all in the South — but also generally, among the low-paid, and all the legions of new entrants into the ranks of the working class. It is from here that the working class, through the struggle to fulfill these tasks, will emerge as an independent force, politically and ideologically, rising to a qualitatively new stage in its onward march to leadership of the nation, to state power, to socialism.

The political strike of the West Virginia coal miners is a harbinger of the direction in which our class is aspiring and moving.

Thirty-six years ago, the Party issued its renowned Open Letter, calling the Party to a policy of concentration on the basic, mass production industries. The whole Party unitedly responded to that call. As a result, the basis was laid for the successful organizing drive which unionized trustified industry. The Party grew into the largest and most influential force for socialism in our country. This was because it devoted all its time, thought and energy to the chief historic task before our class and people at that time.

Today our class is reaching out in struggle to win for itself and its allies a qualitatively new status, to achieve political independence, and the setting of a new — a people's — course for our country on the basis of the successful completion of the tasks discussed in this letter.

Our responsibility and duty are clear: to be with our class in the struggle for the attainment of this great historic goal. For this purpose, we call on the whole Party to make a decisive turn to build the Party and the press among the workers in basic industry, in auto, steel, aircraft, electronics and transport first of all, in all industrial centers of our country, with special attention to the South. This calls for an all-out policy of concentration. We call upon every district, section and club, upon every member, to unite in the struggle for a policy of concentration among workers

in the basic sectors of industry. We call for a sustained and determined drive to bring the industrial membership of the Party up to 50 per cent of a much larger Party by the 20th Convention.

We call on every district, section and club to immediately establish goals for shop and industrial clubs, for concentration and recruitment and press building, to be fulfilled by January 1, 1970 as the opening stage in the battle for concentration, for the policy of the 19th Convention. Fifty new shop and industrial clubs by January 1st! One thousand new readers of the Communist press in concentration plants by January 1st! Thousands of new readers for the left labor press by January 1st!

The thoughts and energies of all our leadership at all levels, of the entire membership, must center on and be directed toward winning these objectives. The eight months following this Convention to January 1st must be marked by an accelerated tempo of work aimed at decisively turning the Party to the working class, to extend its ties with our class by thousands of unbreakable links, to extend its leadership and influence to tens and hundreds of thousands in all sectors of the people's movements. Thus will we make a decisive contribution and fulfill our vanguard role in advancing the unity of our people in struggle against the monopolist enemy and for the working class power — for socialism in our country.

### ***The Working Class—Pivot of Struggle***

If the whole Party participates in carrying out the proposals of this open letter, it will have results which we cannot now foresee. Certainly we cannot do less than the students who, in their excellent activities, are beginning to see the decisive role of labor. We cannot do less than the Black Panthers, who also are beginning to see the role of labor. These small tricklings are going to merge into a powerful stream. There will be a merger of these streams, and, comrades, in a very short time we are going to see the emergence of a most powerful battering ram.

All of these developments which I propose have nothing in common with the so-called concept of revolutionary unions.



This is not a correct placement of the problem. In countries with mighty labor movements like France and Italy, one does not speak of revolutionary unions but of a struggle against monopoly in all of its forms and of our democratic offensive against these monopolies which carries with it a struggle against labor reformism, against class collaborationism. And comrades, there is such a thing as progressive and democratic trade unionism.

This is the key at this moment to uniting the broadest sections of the working class, and uniting them in a militant fight for their fundamental interests. It is the key to furthering the process of radicalization. Comrade Hall discussed this process as the tendency to higher forms of consciousness. Of course, class consciousness, revolutionary consciousness is something else, more akin to the consciousness of a vanguard party.

Coal miners are talking about "black lung." In New Kensington, West Virginia a meeting of 250 miners took place at which two doctors spoke. During the discussion from the floor, one miner said: "I understand that in the Eastern European socialist countries there are very few mine disasters. The mines are very safe and the air is very good. How come?" Another miner said he thought one reason could be that over there the state owns everything and that they have the resources to do everything to make the mines safe. Whereupon a third miner said: "In that case we ought to demand that the mines be nationalized."

This is an expression of radicalization, and such expressions are growing in steel, in auto, in electronics, in transport—everywhere.

During the year 1968 some 4,700 strike struggles took place in this country, involving some 2,300,000 workers. Think of that! And this does not take into account the many one-day walkouts, wildcat strikes and work stoppages. During January of this year, the most recent month for which figures are reported, there were some 320 strikes involving 182,000 workers—the highest numbers in the last thirty years.

The press does not report all of this. When people speak

about where the action is, they are usually talking about the demonstrative actions, forgetting this pivot, this working-class base which the demonstrative actions need, just as the working-class base needs the demonstrative actions. But the lever for achieving a union of the two is to see the centrality of the working class.

### ***Against Racism: The Task of White Communists***

Comrade Hall spoke at length about the black and white workers. I endorse what he said one hundred per cent. I want to speak only on one question in relation to black workers, and that relates to the struggle against racism.

I think some splendid things have been said along this line, but I wish to address myself to white Communists. The struggle against racism in the United States is difficult. It is hard. But that's the essence of the fight to overthrow capitalism in the United States. Capitalism cannot be overthrown unless white workers understand their own class responsibility, their duty to defend the fundamental interests of black men and women. This poses as the primary task fighting among the whites within the white community to change conceptions and practices. It is easy to record the militant and radical upsurge among the black workers, and it is easy to declare that when the racist police attack black workers in the ghetto, the task of whites is to come to the defense of black workers. I say that is good, that is noble. But is that the whole story?

The white ruling class sponsors these beastly attacks in the ghetto. The white ruling class is responsible for the discriminatory policies in industry. The white ruling class is responsible for a legal system, a government structure which is the essence of racist oppression.

Now, comrades, just think of it. When Judge George Crockett in Detroit is aroused at four in the morning to set up court in the prosecutor's office and release some 135 black victims of frame-up, and when he even takes action against the prosecuting attor-

ney, that is an act of heroic proportions. But then I ask myself the question: Is it the task of white workers to wait for the moment when retribution is brought down on a Judge Crockett as part of the attack on the whole black community, or is it not rather their task to struggle in such a way as to have some white Judge Crocketts?

When we speak of the beastly racist character of the police, of stopping them, isn't it the primary task of white Communists to work in such a way as to prevent the outbreak of their beastly attacks? The police department is carrying on a campaign of fascization; is it not the task of white Communists to mobilize white masses to prevent this fascization of the police? Is it not a mass task among whites to curb and even to legally disarm the police?

The National Guard is called out to suppress the militant struggles of blacks. Is it not the duty of our white Communists to mobilize white masses to prevent the use of the National Guard and the armed forces against the struggle for equality by blacks? A big to-do will be made about the black students fighting for equality on the campus. But is it not correct to ask what kind of a system produces the conditions that necessitate such a struggle on the part of blacks to receive a simple education? Is it not the duty of white Communists to mobilize white students, white masses in general, to remove those conditions?

### ***The Example of Peekskill***

A shining example of the mobilization of white workers in such a cause was shown by the events in Peekskill in 1949. Comrade Irving Potash, then an official of the Fur Workers Union, played a leading part in these events. Here is an account of them, as told by him:

In 1949 during the Smith Act trial of the Party's "eleven," Paul Robeson and a large audience at a concert in an open lot in Peekskill, New York, were attacked by a white mob of racists and fascists. Robeson was barely saved from

serious injury, but his audience was dispersed and the concert was broken up. The fascist racists were protected by the local police.

When we learned about this attack, the Fur Workers Union accepted my proposal that we not only protest but also publicly invite Robeson to go back to Peekskill under the protection of active fur workers and other trade unionists and Communists.

The Fur Workers Union then officially invited other unions to take similar action and to join with us in organizing a mass self-defense body to protect Robeson and the concert audience. We called a special meeting of all shop stewards and active workers and they unanimously backed our decision.

Robeson accepted the invitation and the offer. So did District 65 and other unions and, of course, the Communist Party of New York. Hundreds of rank-and-file white and black workers volunteered for the self-defense organization.

When the concert took place, a chain of hundreds of black and white workers and Communists armed with baseball bats and other appropriate means of defense surrounded the open lot and also the concert platform. Most of the volunteers were veterans of World War II and they wore their veteran caps.

We did not call for insurrection or violence. We did not make public declarations about arming the workers. But we were adequately prepared to meet any attack of the racists and the police and to protect Robeson from bodily harm, and in this manner safeguard our Constitutional right to self-defense.

The fascists and the police knew that and therefore did not dare attack Paul and the audience on the concert grounds. This was a significant defeat for the racists and a great victory for black and white united action against racism.

Paul did sing his mighty songs of freedom.

The racists did hide in the hills surrounding the roads leading from the concert grounds and from there pelted with stones the cars leaving the concert.

A number of us arranged to drive our cars ahead of Robeson's so as to take the brunt of such an attack. Some of us were injured when the stones hit our windshields. My

eyes were filled with glass, but the hospital to which I was rushed managed to remove most of the glass and save my eyes. A few of the worker-defenders were seriously injured. But we succeeded in preventing any injury to Paul Robeson.

It should be known that we recruited white workers for the defense of the great black freedom fighter, Paul Robeson, by convincing the white workers that the fascist racists who threatened the life of Robeson also threatened the life and welfare of white workers and our unions, and that if they were allowed to take the freedom and the life of Robeson, the black man, they would strike a blow to black-white unity and also dare attack the unions and the rights of all workers, black and white. Peekskill was thus a lesson in "self-interest" as a weapon for black and white unity and on how to approach self-defense.

Peekskill showed how, under certain conditions, trade unions and white workers can be involved in the struggles of the black people for their just demands and for their freedom. Active participation of Communists in the life and struggles of the trade unions and of the workers in the shops — these are the prerequisites for a Communist's successful leadership of workers in struggle against racism, for unity and class consciousness of our working class.

### ***How to Apply the Lessons***

The lessons of Peekskill can well be applied today.

Comrades, one must ask whether it is not true that among us today it is possible to see the motes in the eyes of black people, of men and women fighting for their rights, while we fail to see the motes in our own eyes. How is it possible to see those motes except by looking in a mirror? Communists must be the first to look and to draw the conclusions in terms of their own responsibility.

How then should Communists act? What conclusions should we draw? First of all, we should see the role of white workers in the organized labor movement, in the struggle against racism in every form. The building trades show the worst manifestation of racism, but it exists in every industry. Without struggling against this the trade union movement cannot be mobilized to

fight against job discrimination or to play its role in the communities. In short, the first duty of white Communists is not to become experts on what black people are doing but to become experts on how to change things in white America.

We have to think deep and hard, unlike the bourgeois liberals, of how to raise the fight against racism to a new high. This is the fight for unity of the class. This is the fight for white labor to understand its responsibility. This is the meaning of Karl Marx's statement that "Labor in the white skin cannot be free so long as labor in the black skin is branded."

But comrades, to fight in a mass way means that we have to steel our Party. Let us think through a situation where comrades get up and deliver the most profound speeches, but where conventions can be held without the presence of a single black, Chicano, Puerto Rican or Indian delegate. How can that be? Even seats in Democratic Party conventions are being challenged for such reasons. Comrades, the fight against chauvinism must become a primary task of our Party. Our Party has always been regarded as a party of the Negro people. It must become that once more. In that way we can move along with seven-league boots and build our Party into a mass party in the United States.

I want to say some words about the Chicanos, who fight for equal rights, for national rights, not only in the urban communities but also on the land. Their struggles have great meaning in the fight against monopoly, in the fight against imperialism. In these struggles there are domestic problems which must be solved, problems which call not only for unity among the Chicanos but also for black and Chicano unity and the unity of both with whites. A great deal has been said about Puerto Ricans. Much more will be said. Much has been said about Indian Americans. Much more will be said. Both are in the throes of great battles which, as they develop, bring more and more to the forefront the need for unity.

The task of our Party is to gear itself for leadership among these masses. And we should not make the mistake of concluding

that because all four categories are oppressed there exists no enmity among them. In this connection, we should note the recent increase of white chauvinism and anti-Arab chauvinism among the Jewish people, including the increased influence of such ideas among Jewish Communists and progressives. Our fight for unity, pressing the fight against monopoly and against imperialism, must also take this into account.

Comrades, the United States is a big country. It is divided into major regions, each with its distinctive features, into urban and rural, industrial and agricultural areas. A region of crucial importance is the South. Here the rapid buildup and extension of our work is most essential. The Party was always needed in the South, but today that need takes on even greater force if the kind of leadership required is to be given to the task of organizing the unorganized. Here lies the key to ending the wage differential between black and white, between South and North. Here lies the key to the advancement of democracy in our country. In all this the Party is an indispensable instrument. Our concentration policy must therefore place as a major task the building of the Party in the South, first among the workers in basic industry, but also among those in the rural South—the tenant farmers and the agricultural workers.

### ***Democratic Centralism—Cornerstone of Our Party***

A successful effort to implement the program of our Party, to build it into a mass party, requires that we concern ourselves with a number of problems. I have in mind, first, the struggle against bureaucracy. Bureaucracy is a disease. To the degree that it exists, the efforts of the Party will be blunted. Bureaucracy is, first of all, a denial of the struggle for the mass line of the Party. If we say we want to make big changes among the organized sections of the working class, black and white, among women in industry, in the peace movement, there must be a continuing struggle against bureaucracy because it is a retarding force, an obstacle to the solution of that problem.

Bureaucracy is the denial of collectivity, through which the best thought of the collective is brought into play, through which the individuality of Communists is brought into play—an individuality which is the exact opposite of bourgeois individualism. Bureaucracy is the existence of that type of leadership which prevents the emergence of new cadre and the drawing of these cadre into the struggle for the line of the Party.

Comrades, as we return to the districts the thing that we should keep uppermost in our minds is the constant improvement of the cornerstone of our Party—democratic centralism. There are some things we should like to say that this Convention can help us say by writing into our Constitution a more explicit definition of this concept. It is not there now, and I should like to propose the following changed section of our Constitution:

### PROPOSED NEW ARTICLE III: PRINCIPLES OF ORGANIZATION.

Section 1. The system of organization of the Communist Party is based on the principle of democratic centralism, which guarantees the unity of theory and practice of the membership and leadership. Democratic centralism combines the maximum involvement of the membership in determining policy and in the democratic election of leading committees, responsible direction from one national center, coordinating the activity of the entire Party along common, agreed upon lines of policy.

Section 2. After a thorough discussion in any club, committee or convention, decisions are arrived at by majority vote. All members, including those who disagree, are duty bound to explain, fight for and carry out such decisions. The will of the minority is thus subordinated to the will of the majority. Those who disagree have the right to reserve their opinions, to appeal a decision to a higher body, and request that the question be reopened, and to express their views through the channels established for that purpose during pre-convention discussion periods, but no member or leader has the right to violate such decisions or to combine with others to conduct an organized struggle for their point



of view. Factions are impermissible in the Communist Party.

Section 3. The principle of democratic centralism includes a common discipline for all members and leaders to fulfill the decisions arrived at by the majority. Discipline is voluntarily assumed by members of the Party, based on conviction, understanding and devotion to the cause to which the Party dedicates its efforts.

Section 4. Election of leadership at all levels shall be carried through with the fullest participation of the membership on the basis of a critical review of the work and policies of the Party and on a critical evaluation of all leading committees and individuals. Leading committees are responsible to those who elected them, and are subject to recall.

Section 5. Each Communist organization or committee is subordinated to the next higher body, with central authority vested in the national convention, the highest body of the Party, which not only has the authority to act on all aspects of Party policy and activity, but elects the national leadership to carry through its will and decisions between conventions. Decisions of the national convention and its elected leadership are binding upon all members and leaders.

### ***Against Factionalism***

To act thus is to fight to strengthen our Party, and in this connection I should like to say a word about factionalism. Factionalism is usually the work of the enemy from within. Factionalism is usually coordinated with outside repressive measures to weaken the Party, to undermine the Party, to destroy it. The fight against factionalism is a fight against alien concepts and alien practices within the Party. Our Party grows stronger as it forges the struggle against factionalism. But factionalism oftentimes develops under the cover of "free discussion," whereas in reality it makes impossible free discussion within the Communist Party.

Our Party is for free discussion, open discussion. Our Party can grow and develop only when there is free and open discussion. But this can be abused. Lenin, in *What Is to be Done?*, states:

"Freedom" is a grand word, but under the banner of Free Trade the most predatory wars were conducted; under the banner of "free labor," the toilers were robbed. The term "freedom of criticism" contains the same inherent falsehood. Those who are really convinced that they have advanced science, would demand, not freedom for the new views to continue side by side with the old, but the substitution of the old views by the new views. The cry "Long live freedom of criticism," that is heard today, too strongly calls to mind the fable of the empty barrel.

We are marching in a compact group along a precipitous and difficult path, firmly holding each other by the hand. We are surrounded on all sides by enemies, and we have to advance under their almost constant fire. We have combined voluntarily, precisely for the purpose of fighting the enemy and not to retreat into the adjacent marsh, the inhabitants of which, from the very outset, have reproached us with having separated ourselves into an exclusive group and with having chosen the path of struggle instead of the path of conciliation. And now several in our crowd begin to cry out: Let us go into this marsh! And when we begin to shame them, they retort: How conservative you are! Are you not ashamed to deny us the right to invite you to take a better road!

Oh yes, gentlemen! You are free, not only to invite us, but to go yourselves whenever you will, even into the marsh. In fact, we think that the marsh is your proper place, and we are prepared to render *you* every assistance to get there. Only let go of our hands, don't clutch at us and don't besmirch the grand word "freedom" for we too are "free" to go where we please, free not only to fight against the marsh, but also those who are turning towards the marsh. (International Publishers, New York, 1929, pp. 14-15.)

Comrades, factionalism is a most destructive force. It is incompatible with membership in our Party. It must be rooted out of our ranks, firmly and without hesitation.

The stakes are high. We have a responsibility to our class and our people. We will not be swayed by anyone in our fight to fulfill that responsibility, and we will let nothing stop us in the

fight for the mass policies contained in the report of Comrade Hall.

It is important to understand that democratic centralism is indivisible. It must apply to all policies, all decisions without exception. Some comrades who disagree with the Party's position on the events in Czechoslovakia have asked why we cannot demand unity on domestic questions but allow disagreement on international questions. These comrades fail to see the oneness of Party policy. They fail to see that it stems from one body of theory, one set of principles. Differences on international questions are therefore quickly reflected in differences on domestic questions.

The principles involved in the case of Czechoslovakia have their domestic parallels. For example, when an international union is waging an industry-wide strike over a large area of the country, and when the general strike committee determines that a local strike committee is being demoralized by anti-strike elements and agents of the employers, threatening the strike and the union, that general strike committee is duty-bound to intervene in the local situation to safeguard the strike, the workers' interests and their union. The same applies where a local union is conducting a strike which is similarly threatened and where the international union intervenes to protect the strike and the union.

Democratic centralism, if it is to be effective, is also inseparable from the constant practice of criticism and self-criticism. Only if it thus constantly reviews its policies and its work can the Party assure the correctness of its direction and move unitedly in that direction.

### ***The Role of the Press***

Finally, comrades, I wish to speak, at least briefly, about some especially important problems.

I spoke earlier about the indispensable role of our daily

paper, which was created since the 18th Convention. I hope I am not stepping on anyone's toes because I know the paper will be dealt with in panel and will come up for discussion. But this is such a great event that I feel a word or two necessary.

For more than thirty years, the Pittsburgh district of our Party had no newsstand sales of our paper. This Party organization was practically driven out of existence. Anti-Communism in Pittsburgh was rife, spawned by the Mellons, the Pews and the Musmannos. Few districts have undergone such attacks as Pittsburgh has been subjected to. But now the *Daily World* is on thirteen newsstands, including some in front of steel mills. A black steelworker takes the paper into the mill. The foreman asks: "What you got there, a Commie paper?" The steelworker replies: "Do you have anything better?"

Or take Chicago. Seven hundred papers daily go into that town, carrying the message of our Party. We talk concentration, but here you have a practical demonstration of the role of this paper. Its subscribers consist of rank-and-file workers in the basic shops, of shop committeemen, of business agents who speak to the workers in the plants about grievances. The paper becomes an instrument in the fight for control of the struggles in the shop by the workers, in the development of rank-and-file movements.

This is an enormous achievement. And what's more, the possibility of building and extending this paper has a very bright future, given the full support of our Party, because I am certain that this paper will become more and more an organ which will interpret events, analyze events and project a Communist point of view. I am certain that this paper will become more and more a crusader for issues of concern to the workers and to the people in the ghettos, in the barrios, in the community at large.

Comrades, I urge that we give this paper every possible support. It must be built, it must be extended as a voice to win the mass movement for correct policies and to help build this Party.

## ***Our Educational and Ideological Work***

Of extreme importance for the growth and advancement of our Party is the question of reconstructing completely our educational work. I believe that few Communist parties in the capitalist world face the ideological tasks that confront our Party. Ideological conflicts on a world scale have greatly sharpened. The ideological offensive of U.S. monopoly capital, here and abroad, has been tremendously stepped up. And with the continuing upsurge of mass struggles in this country, ideological ferment and debate have reached unparalleled intensity. Victory in these struggles is of decisive importance at this moment in our history.

The fight for theory, for the minds of the masses, has become an urgent question. In this regard, it is of great significance that there has developed a wide and growing interest in Marxist theory in our country. It is with great pride that I note that there is one institution which is the recipient of orders by the hundreds of thousands for Marxist-Leninist works. In the past six years this institution has issued more than 105,000 copies of the *Communist Manifesto*, 24,500 copies of *The German Ideology* by Marx and Engels, 33,500 copies of Lenin's *Imperialism*, 40,500 copies of his *State and Revolution*, and 29,000 of his *What Is To Be Done?* In addition to this it has published and sold large editions of many recent Marxist works by American and other authors.

This institution is doing great work in spreading the theory of Marxism-Leninism. Towns you have never heard of order Marxist works. Universities and colleges order Marxist works. Hundreds of thousands of them. There is a mass hunger for our literature, and in relation to Marxist literature on black people they have no place to turn except to this institution. The task is to see that these Marxist works become a part of our orientation toward the working class, for that hunger exists there as well. And insofar as the Party is concerned, great strides have been

made in the establishment of bookstores across the country. These must become important centers for spreading Marxist-Leninist ideology.

At the same time it must be said that we have lagged seriously in the ideological work of the Party itself. On this question the Draft Resolution correctly states:

We must note particularly the serious shortcomings in the Party's ideological work. In the face of the great demands in this sphere today, the Party has not sufficiently equipped itself to meet the tasks imposed on it, nor has the leadership as a whole been geared to this work. We have not combatted sufficiently the current flood of ideas hostile to Marxism—the ideas of Marcuse, Gorz, Debray and others. Our weakness in this respect has opened the doors to the spread of such ideas and to their influence in our own ranks. Clearly, if we are to meet the present ideological offensive, our work in this field will need to be overhauled and improved greatly.

The task before us is a big one and an urgent one. Our organization of curricula, of classes and schools, has to be completely adapted to the struggles to realize the program of this Party. A fresh approach to the content of our schools and classes has to be developed. In addition, their number has to be multiplied throughout the country. There is need to re-establish Marxist schools in the major cities and greatly to expand the use of forums, symposia and similar forms of educational instruments. It is necessary to increase many times the issuance of brochures and pamphlets, as well as to overhaul our system of literature distribution.

All this requires a considerable expansion and reorganization of our educational apparatus, to equip it to meet these responsibilities. It requires new approaches by the educational department to its tasks. But it also requires consistent attention to ideological work on the part of the entire leadership, nationally and in the districts. What is called for is a shift in priorities.

## ***On Cadre Training***

Our educational work must also be so adapted as to defend the system of Party organization against those who develop non-class theories. Theories are being advanced to the effect that "we need leaders" and "we do not need leaders and followers," or that "we need thinking individuals" or "we need creative individuals." In such theories, collectivity is completely thrown out of the window. To place the emphasis on the individual as opposed to the collective is not thinking in a Communist way.

At the same time, we need to develop a policy of rapid cadre training. It is with pride that I look upon our youth cadre, black and white, which has shot up overnight. It is a Marxist-Leninist cadre, able, fighting for our program, fighting to defend the interests of our class, based on our Party and with confidence in the future. The educational department has to help extend this kind of development in our movement.

But our cadre must be trained in the spirit of collectivity, in the spirit of the Party. This is the only effective way in which a vanguard can operate in today's class struggles. Those who think that what is needed is simply thinking, creative individuals fail to see that the best thinking arises out of the *collective*. They fail to see the creativeness of the collective and to understand that the solution of problems is truly possible only through the collective. To fail to see these things represents a wrong approach to all cadre and especially to youth. It is an anarchistic approach. Our cadre must be trained to become the best fighters in the struggles of today; they must be trained in a Party way.

The period ahead must see the growing emergence of new cadre from the trade unions. This Convention already witnesses the increased presence of youth from the shops as well as from the campuses. Our next convention must find this process much further advanced.

I should like to incorporate in this report that section of the Draft Resolution which deals with the Party and its vanguard

role, the struggle against revisionism and other forms of opportunism, the task of strengthening the Party organizationally and ideologically, and a self-critical look at the work of the Party since the 18th Convention.

Karl Liebknecht once said that he who has the youth has the future. I wish to conclude with these words: that we should have faith in the future. We should have that faith because we have faith in our class, and we can have faith in our class only if we have faith in our Party. The road to victory in the struggle for peace, democracy and socialism is inconceivable without our becoming a mass party. We must become such a party. We must build our Party with that end in view.

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