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***The
Awesome
Responsibilities
of
Revolutionary
Leadership***



By James and Grace Boggs

This article was originally published in the April 1970 Monthly Review under the title "The Role of the Vanguard Party", as one of a group of articles commemorating the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Lenin.

For its republication in pamphlet form, we have chosen the title "The Awesome Responsibilities of Revolutionary Leadership" in order to emphasize the absolute and urgent necessity to build a vanguard party which accepts the responsibilities not only of the struggle for power but for developing the vision of how the revolutionary party will meet the material and human needs of the entire society when it comes to power.

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The Awesome Responsibilities of Revolutionary Leadership

All over the world this spring, wherever Marxist-Leninist parties have come to power, there will be mammoth celebrations of the hundredth anniversary of Lenin's birth. Where Marxist-Leninist parties are still striving to win power, often struggling with each other over how to achieve it, celebrations will also take place. There will even be celebrations by parties that call themselves Marxist-Leninist but have never even conceived of themselves taking power. Liberals also will take advantage of the occasion to try to discredit Lenin, exposing what they call the "bureaucratic tendencies" inherent in his concept of the vanguard party and trying to make him responsible for everything that has taken place in Soviet Russia since his death. Whatever one's political complexion, everyone is compelled to recognize that what Lenin thought and did has fundamentally altered the course of the world in which we live.

Today many people talk about Marxism-Leninism without any understanding of the historical development of Marxist thought which Lenin represents, much less of the historical developments in revolutionary politics that have taken place in other parts of the world since Lenin.

Marx, writing in nineteenth-century Western Europe where the rapidly advancing industrial revolution was creating a powerful capitalist class and a burgeoning working class, developed a scientific, i.e., historical and dialectical, method for analyzing the conflict of social forces developing inside capitalist production, projecting the working class—disciplined, united, and organized by the process of production itself—as the social force to overthrow capitalism and institute a new mode of socialized

production. Lenin, tackling the problems of backward Tsarist Russia a generation later, utilized Marx's method to analyze the development of Russian capitalism, to anticipate the class struggle inseparable from this development, and to project the socialist revolution as the only solution. But when the Russian working class began its economic struggles, Lenin did not wait upon its "inevitable" revolt to bring about the socialist revolution. Instead, practically single-handedly, he assumed the awesome responsibility of building the kind of tightly disciplined organization which would be able to take state power at the head of the Russian working class and all the other oppressed and discontented strata of Russian society. Without this party which it took Lenin seventeen years of unpublicized, protracted struggle to build, the power which lay in the streets in 1917 Russia might have ended up in the same kind of hands which picked it up in 1968 France. What few people realize is that until 1917 Lenin rarely addressed himself to a mass audience, either in writing or speaking, or appeared on the public platform. Instead, he concentrated his extraordinary abilities and energies on the task which he had concluded was decisive to the success of the Russian Revolution: the building of an apparatus of dedicated, disciplined revolutionists to lead the masses in the struggle for power.

For the revolutionary movements developing today in every country, the great contribution of Lenin was the clarity with which he put forward and acted upon his fundamental convictions regarding the vanguard party: (1) that the purpose of a revolutionary party is to take absolute power in order to revolutionize the economic and social system as the only way of resolving fundamental popular grievances; (2) that it is absolutely essential to build a revolutionary vanguard party if you are serious about taking power and not just playing with the phrase; and (3) that a revolutionary party can only be built by (a) unceasing ideological struggle, (b) strict discipline, (c) organized activity of every member, and (d) merciless self-criticism.

In the United States, as the black movement struggles to define its goals and the means to achieve them, the question of what constitutes a black revolutionary party is going to become increasingly the center of discussion and controversy. In order

for this discussion and controversy to be meaningful, the black movement will have to make a serious study of the concept of the vanguard party as developed and practiced by its originator. To believe that the black revolutionary movement can evade such a study because Lenin was white and European would be just as ridiculous as for an African freedom fighter to refuse to fly an airplane because the Wright brothers were white Americans. Blacks don't refuse to drive Cadillacs because they are made by General Motors or to watch television because Philco (Ford) manufactures TV sets. Whatever has been achieved in human history, whether technological or political, blacks have a right to inherit. The very high development of the theory and practice of the vanguard party as originated by Lenin in Russia, and subsequently developed by Mao and Ho in Asia and Amilcar Cabral in Africa, belongs to all the oppressed people of the world, providing those who seek to end the domination of man by man with guidelines which they ignore at their peril. It must be borne in mind at the same time that these guidelines can be applied only in relation to the specific conditions of a particular country and only by an organization that has developed out of indigenous forces and is not totally dependent upon external or foreign aid for its existence.*

* In the last period because of the understandable concentration on black pride and black consciousness, there has been a tendency among black would-be revolutionaries to refuse to have anything to do with anything or anyone that was not all-black. The result in some cases has been ludicrous, e.g., black militants unable to discuss theoretical and political questions among themselves because the only language they have in common is English, or black history teachers glorifying African rulers of the past who were no less abusive of their subjects than white tyrants of the same epoch.

As Black Nationalism undergoes the necessary transition into Black Revolutionary Nationalism, what is and what is not historically relevant to black people will have to be redefined. Black revolutionary historians cannot limit themselves to studies that inspire black people with pride and consciousness. They must also give the black movement that sense of historical continuity with a revolutionary past which every revolutionary movement needs in order to develop a sound basis for its present theory and practice. In the very difficult period ahead, every source of theoretical and political strength must be mined. The richest source, apart from the ongoing struggle of the masses, is undoubtedly what has been attempted by other revolutionists in this and other countries. Thus black revolutionary historians must provide the movement with critical studies in two main arenas:

Fifty years ago the Old Left tried to adapt Lenin's view of the vanguard party to party-building in the United States. However, they were responding more to revolutionary momentum in Russia and Europe than to conditions in the United States. It was therefore impossible for them really to understand Lenin's concept of the vanguard party which had been developed to resolve the specific historical contradiction recognized by Lenin in the Russia of 1900, namely, the narrow or superficial scope of revolutionary work by Russian militants in comparison with the breadth of the spontaneous movement of Russian workers. The dilemma of white radicals in this country has been and still is the exact opposite, namely, their own intensive theoretical and organizational activity compared with the narrow scope of the spontaneous movement in the American working class which, nevertheless, in their theory remains the chief social force for the American revolution. Only for a brief period during the thirties was this not the case. But by that

First, with regard to black liberation leaders of the past (from Toussaint L'Ouverture, Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner, Frederick Douglass, Marcus Garvey, W. E. B. DuBois, to Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, Rap Brown, and Huey Newton), what each achieved, what each was unable to achieve, and how much this falling short of the goal of black liberation was due to objective conditions of the time and how much to subjective factors, i.e., inadequate revolutionary theory and practice. In this respect the black movement in the United States has an incalculable advantage over white radical groupings because it has this tremendous wealth of historical experiences to draw upon and evaluate. By contrast, white "revolutionaries" throughout American history from the Founding Fathers to the present, with the sole exception of the Abolitionists, have always defined the American problem in terms of white-white relations, dealing with white-black oppression, if at all, only as an afterthought.

Second, with regard to revolutionary movements and the theory and practice of revolutionary leaders of the whole world, and particularly those of that part known as the Third World. Until the black revolutionary movement is ready to take seriously the scientific approach to revolution developed by Marx, Lenin, Ho, and Giap, it will still be depending upon mystical or external guidance to achieve the power which can only be achieved by the most rigorous scientific appraisal of social forces. Mao, Ho, and Cabral did not reject the necessity for a scientific approach to revolution because the founders of this approach were white. They used the method of Marx and Lenin, being careful at the same time to distinguish between the specific conditions of their own countries and those of Europe and Russia.

time the Marxist parties in this country had oriented their politics so completely around what was happening in Soviet Russia that they had not developed any perspective or program for taking power in the United States. Having occupied themselves for so long in proving a theory rather than programming for revolution, they were unprepared for anything more than militant trade-union leadership when the industrial workers erupted in the thirties.

Today black revolutionaries are confronted with a contradiction very similar to that faced by Lenin when he first began to lay the foundations of the vanguard party. Ever since 1964 the black masses in every Northern city have been either in, or on the verge of, spontaneous eruption. Every year millions of black people, and particularly black youth, are made "ready for anything" by the worsening conditions in every black community, the obvious inability of white power to cope with the critical social problems of an advancing technology, the mushrooming of white counter-revolutionary groupings, and the growing division among whites and within the ruling class as to which course to pursue to overcome the crisis. As in Lenin's day (and in his words) the movement has already produced "enormous numbers of people . . . who desire to protest, who are ready to render all the assistance they can in the fight against absolutism. . . . At the same time we have no people, because we have no leaders . . . no talented organizers capable of organizing extensive and at the same time uniform and harmonious work that would give employment to all forces. . . ." (*What Is To Be Done?*) The scope of spontaneous activity among the black masses has been growing far beyond the capacity of the black movement to provide revolutionary political leadership.

For the black movement and the black community the necessity for rapid development of a party able to give revolutionary leadership to the masses is not an abstract question. It is a matter of the utmost urgency. Every day thousands of blacks are made "ready for anything," often by a "routine" incident of police, foreman, school-principal, or social-worker brutality. Periodically a major "incident," such as the murder of Martin Luther King or Fred Hampton, transforms millions of blacks

into potential revolutionaries. Just because a vanguard party with a revolutionary perspective, program, and trained cadres is not at hand to give direction to these rebels does not mean that they disappear from the historical stage. Rather they find other outlets for their rebellious energies. They drift from one Black Nationalist grouping or Black Power street gang to another, going "wherever the action is," or engage in different forms of hustling or banditry which as often as not are directed against other members of the black community. The result in the black community is a sense of unending crisis, chaos, and desperation from top to bottom. The situation in Northern cities is thus beginning to resemble more and more that of the Chinese countryside before the Communist Party and the Red Army under Mao were able to develop the revolutionary perspective, the cadres, and the program to politicize and incorporate the unemployed or underemployed youth who were pillaging the peasants in independent gangs or as part of the numerous warlord armies.

Before the black movement can summon up the profound theoretical and practical energies to create a vanguard party, it must first destroy—root and branch—the illusion that the spontaneous eruptions of the black masses are sufficient to achieve revolutionary change. Not until this illusion has been completely eliminated can black would-be revolutionaries apply themselves to the task of building a vanguard party with the urgency and energy that are required. Only then will they be ready to face up to the awesome responsibility which Lenin faced, of building that structure without which there can be no successful revolution. To destroy every remnant of this illusion in himself and those around him was the task Lenin set himself in *What Is To Be Done?*

It is only since the Watts rebellion in 1965 that the black movement and black leaders have begun to rely upon the spontaneous eruption of the masses. Prior to 1965, when the action was chiefly in the South, black militants recognized the need for organization as the only means for initiating mass action and as the necessary condition for survival in a society where open dictatorship and violence by whites left no room for democratic illusions. (Organization in the South in that period did

not, of course, take the form of building a revolutionary party, since the aim of the movement was not Black Power but integration.)

In the last five years, however, side by side with the talk of Black Power, black leaders have acted as if all they had to do in order to advance the revolution is to act as spokesmen for the "brothers on the street." This is due, first of all, to the speed with which the brothers on the city streets have exploded, as if in a chain reaction, from city to city, giving the movement the assurance that "something is always going to happen." Secondly, the pride, aggressiveness, and unity which these eruptions have unleashed in all segments of the black community have created a sense of increasing excitement and momentum. And, finally, the skill with which a threatened white power structure has manipulated TV exposure of black militants and black salesmen for the American Way of Life (commercials), funding of community projects ("reparations"), highly visible and highly paid jobs for black careerists, and a steady stream of black publications, has created the widespread illusion that the actual and/or threatened spontaneous eruptions of the black masses are bringing Black Power closer.

Meanwhile, in fact, overall conditions in the black community have been deteriorating, while at the same time the spontaneous activities of the black street masses and the much publicized but futile reform efforts of the white power structure have aroused the "white backlash," which is only another name for the fascist counter-revolution.

There is little point in complaining about the skillful use of the Almighty American Dollar to co-opt Black Power or the rise of the fascist counter-revolution. In confusing, undermining, and mobilizing to repress the black movement, white power is only doing what its self-interest dictates. If the fault lies anywhere, it is with the black movement for failing to arm the black community theoretically and politically against the predictable strategy and tactics of the enemy and to make clear that fascism cannot be stopped short of a total revolution dedicated to ending man's domination of man and his fear of those whom he dominates.

To do this, the black movement must recognize and keep

pointing out the limits of what can be achieved by the black masses, for the same reason that Lenin insisted on the limits of what could be achieved by the spontaneous eruptions of Russian workers. The spontaneity of the workers does not take them beyond the level of the immediate, palpable, concrete interests of the everyday economic struggle, as Lenin kept pointing out. In a similar vein, black revolutionists must realize that the spontaneous eruptions of the black masses do not take them beyond the demand that white power alleviate their accumulated grievances, no matter how angry or explosive the masses are or how much Black Power talk and symbolism accompany their actions. Reliance upon spontaneity is, therefore, a form of liberalism because, in effect, it increases the illusion that the issues and grievances of the masses can be resolved without taking power away from those in power.

A revolutionary party becomes historically necessary and justified when the contradictions and antagonisms of a particular society have created a mass social force whose felt needs cannot be satisfied by reform but only by a revolution which takes power away from those in power. In addition to mobilizing this mass social force around its own grievances, the revolutionary party must then be ready to fulfill two additional tasks: (1) it must be able to project the vision of a new society which will solve these grievances by destroying the system that has created the domination of man over man, thus making life more human for everybody; and (2) it must have developed cadres of leaders with whom the masses can identify, and programs of struggle that will take the masses stage by stage to ever higher levels of political struggle, political consciousness, and actual control of facets (or bases) of power. Thus the revolutionary vanguard party serves the function of escalating the vision and leading the masses from a sense of grievance or unsatisfied *wants* to an awareness of social *needs*, or what is necessary to remedy their grievances. By escalating the struggles of the masses, it raises their consciousness beyond the point of blaming the enemy for their plight and/or depending on him to alleviate it, to the point of depending upon their own efforts and their own power and responsibility to effect real change. At this stage, when the masses are already in motion,

any party or organization which simply keeps them in a high state of agitation, confrontation, or mobilization, is not a revolutionary party, no matter what its claims. A revolutionary vanguard party cannot limit itself to the demands of the masses; it begins to make demands upon the masses themselves to exert greater power and greater responsibility.

"The greater the spontaneous uprising of the masses, the more widespread the movement becomes, so much the more rapidly grows the demand for greater consciousness in the theoretical, political, and organizational work" of the revolutionary leadership, Lenin insisted. At this point militancy without ideology becomes as dangerous as theory without practice. Lenin accused those who passively adapted themselves to spontaneity of tailing or degrading themselves to the level of the masses instead of raising the masses to a higher political and social level. He called them "opportunists," professing to lead the masses when in fact they were only taking advantage of the masses' spontaneous activity to speak for the masses. To the counter-accusation that he was setting up a centralized apparatus to control the mass movement, he replied that a tight organization is necessary not only to combat the opportunists and moderates but to safeguard the movement against the premature actions undertaken by those who mistake the beginning of a struggle for its end.

The polemical style of Lenin's politics has turned off black revolutionaries because their chief acquaintance with it is in the form which it has assumed in the American Marxist groupings, of debates and discussion about what should be done in other countries, or in relation to the black movement to which white radicals cannot in any case give leadership. It is only when you recognize that Lenin's opponents represented real tendencies and real dangers to a spreading mass movement needing revolutionary direction that you can understand why he waged such a merciless ideological struggle against opportunists, liberals, and anarchists.

In the United States black militants have shirked the responsibility for this kind of ideological struggle, partly because of the deep hunger for unity which exists in all sections of the black movement, and partly because of the general political

backwardness of this country which makes it much easier to deal with one's political opponents by character assassination and physical force than by political criticism and ideological struggle. The fact is that, ever since the emergence of the Black Power stage in 1966, serious political differences over the meaning of Black Power have been inevitable. Because these differences have not been clarified politically, they have tended to appear personal, and the movement has declined accordingly. Tendencies which could easily have developed a practical working relationship with one another in action have tried to live together within the same political organization until the political differences have festered into bitter antagonisms. What the black movement has not understood is that the clarification of political differences through ideological struggle by no means implies that there should be disunity in action, particularly on questions of defense against the common enemy or in the struggle for community control of various institutions inside the black community, objectives on which all tendencies in the black movement are agreed. The creation or encouragement of a United Front or Fronts to implement this unity in action and the development of the proper relations between the revolutionary party and the United Front are critical to the success of any revolution. But the first step in creating correct relations is a clear distinction between the purposes and organization of the vanguard party and the purposes and organization of the United Front.*

"We must first divide and then unite," Lenin kept saying. "Better fewer but better." A revolutionary party cannot be built on the quicksand of ideological confusion. Obviously there are a lot of people in the black movement whose political positions are dead wrong, and someone has to have the courage to say it, even if it busts wide open the façade of unity. A political split, like a divorce, is often healthier than trying to live together in the same house when you have fundamental differences. Blacks

* To learn more about the theory and practice of building the United Fronts which, in the course of protracted *popular* struggles over concrete issues and the control of social institutions, develop into dual-power structures or parallel hierarchies, we have to look, not to Lenin and the revolution in Russia, but to the revolutions which combine national and social struggle, e.g., in China, Vietnam, and Guinea-Bissau.

don't all think alike just because they are black any more than Africans or Chinese or Vietnamese do. There are political differences inside the black movement representing different socio-economic layers inside the black community. It is better to start the vanguard party from scratch with the serious few who are committed to the perspective of making the revolution that is necessary to meet the needs of the deepest layers of the black community than with many assorted persons who are all going in different directions and who are therefore bound to split at the moment of crisis, just when the need is for maximum organizational strength and unity. This does not mean that those who cannot or will not accept the ideology and discipline of the vanguard party cannot play a role in the movement or in concrete struggles for liberation that will culminate in the taking of power. But their place is in the various organizations of mass struggle, not in the vanguard party.

At the present time, among those who have been active in the movement over the past few years, there are quite a few people who are considering the formation of a black revolutionary party. Many of them believe that their past record of dedicated struggle in the movement is sufficient qualification for membership or leadership in a revolutionary party. They do not understand that with the emergence of Black Power the black movement left behind it the old stage of reform and integration and entered on a new stage of revolutionary struggle. As long as the black movement and black people were seeking primarily to reform or integrate into the system, what was required from black leadership was relatively simple. It was the outspoken, relentless condemnation of racism, in all its forms, arousing the black masses to a heightened sense of indignation and grievance against the society. This is something that black leaders have always done well and which the Black Power spokesmen of the past period have done superbly. However, ever since the movement changed direction, from being essentially an attempt to reform the system to a revolutionary struggle for power, what has been required from black leadership has been much more difficult because it is something for which blacks have had little previous training. Revolutionary struggle for power requires less rhetoric and more calculation. It re-

quires a different kind of organization with a different, more scientific ideology; different, more disciplined, and committed members who are so convinced of the need for Black Revolutionary Power that the concept could be erased from their minds only by death itself; different, more strategically developed programs for escalating struggles; different, more carefully worked out structures to implement these programs; and different, less flamboyant leadership.

When Lenin first began to build the party in the early 1900s, intellectuals like Martov who had been active and outspoken wanted to be members, but they did not want to break with their past ideas, practices, and associates, and accept the discipline of a party branch or unit. This refusal to break with the politics of the past was the issue around which the split took place at the 1903 Congress of the Russian Party, between the Bolsheviks who stood for a tightly disciplined organization and the Mensheviks who wanted a loose structure which would leave members free to speak, write, and move about as they had been doing. The same question is bound to arise in the organization of any black revolutionary party today. It has already surfaced in a number of black organizations, usually during or after a crisis when the opportunities to take the center of the public stage are most numerous and most difficult to resist. This is not because of the lack of sincerity or dedication of any one individual but because the transition to a new stage of political struggle usually requires new people who can meet the new tasks and/or old experienced people who can make a serious self-criticism of their previous political habits and transform their political personalities to meet the new needs. This kind of self-evaluation and transformation is not easy for most people to make. As the objective situation becomes more revolutionary, an increasing number of militants begin to feel the need of an organization to help them make the many decisions that now become pressing. How to respond to the growing demands from the masses for leadership or to the provocations and opportunities proffered by the enemy to render one useless; what to do, what not to do, how to organize one's time and energies most effectively—all these become decisions beyond the capacity of a single individual to make. On the other hand, these

same individuals can find the discipline of the party constraining or "bureaucratic" unless they are continually internalizing through criticism and self-criticism the urgent necessity for a highly organized, disciplined structure as the key to black liberation at this stage.

Recent revolutionary history in Asia, Africa, and Latin America has demonstrated that the most effective revolutionists are those who insist upon this kind of self-criticism and transformation as a normal procedure inside the organization, because they understand that the political energy generated thereby can itself become a force for rapid political development. On the other hand, where nationalist leaders have not insisted upon building self-criticism into the operations of the political organization, political weaknesses have become entrenched, and the masses and the new elite have become more vulnerable to neo-colonialist subversion.

Black people are not only powerless, which is the condition of any oppressed people; they are also undeveloped, because of the national character of their oppression which is similar to that of a colonial people. It is no accident that the concept of rapid political development through self-criticism, originated by Lenin in backward Russia, has achieved its highest development in colonial, i.e., systematically exploited and systematically undeveloped countries like Vietnam, China, Cuba, and Guinea-Bissau. To build the party that is necessary to take power and revolutionize society, the members of the party themselves must undergo rapid political development into new people. The only means available to them to achieve this is also the best means, i.e., the method of constant struggle, constant criticism and constant transformation, utilizing the energy created by the dynamic of error to advance the political maturity of the organization, getting rid of every vestige of liberalism, opportunism, sectarianism, adventurism, egoism, and every tendency towards "militarism" or the separation of military from political struggle. The ideological struggle against other political tendencies and against remnants of these tendencies in every member removes political education from the sphere of abstract generalizations about other revolutions which come so easily to intellectual revolutionaries. It compels the revolutionary organization to de-

velop its own revolutionary concepts from its concrete experiences and practices in party-building, internally and in relation to the masses and other organizations.

In this article we have tried to point out some of the important lessons in building a revolutionary party that the black movement in the United States can learn from Lenin. But everything that Lenin said and did cannot be applied automatically and mechanically to the American Revolution. Black revolutionaries must analyze for themselves the specific situation in the United States in this, the last third of the twentieth century. They must determine for themselves the critical contradiction in this country, which is at one and the same time the technologically most advanced and politically most backward country in the world. From this determination they must project the fundamental goal of a revolution in this country: to create a society of politically conscious, socially responsible individuals able to use technology for the purpose of liberating and developing humanity. They must arrive at their own appraisal of the revolutionary social forces available to achieve this revolutionary humanist objective and of the interrelation between these revolutionary social forces and other social forces in the country. They must make their own appraisal of the present stage of struggle and the programs necessary to advance the struggle towards the projected objective. (See James Boggs, *Racism and the Class Struggle*, Monthly Review Press, forthcoming; also *Manifesto for a Black Revolutionary Party*, Pacesetters Publishing House, P.O. Box 3281, Philadelphia 19121.)

Scientific, i.e., dialectical and historical, method requires the systematic examination of the specific conditions, contradictions, and antagonisms in one's own country and one's own time; the projection of fundamental solutions to these contradictions; and programs of struggle to achieve these solutions. It is only because he understood this, which is the essence of the scientific method, that Lenin was able not only to build the party which led the Russian masses to victory over Tsarism, but also to make the analysis of imperialism and of the colonial struggle (neither of which had matured in the time of Marx), and from this analysis to recognize the revolutionary character of

the nationalist movements in Ireland, Asia, Africa, and among black people in the United States.

Most old radicals thinking about Lenin in the United States today are still thinking of what he did in Russia and the concepts he evolved to achieve the Russian Revolution. In that sense they have become dogmatists, not recognizing that Lenin was building a party for his time, to change intolerable conditions in his country, based on the analysis of the specific conditions in that country. Lenin is not relevant to us unless we have done the same for this country and for our time. Similarly they do not recognize that Marx was writing at a specific stage in Western history and that, if he were living today, he would have advanced his theory far beyond what he wrote in the middle of the nineteenth century, for the simple reason that society itself has advanced to another historical stage.

The Russian Revolution, like every successful revolution since then, took place in a country where the working class was a small fraction of the population. Lenin would have been the first to recognize that a revolution not led by the working class could take place because he recognized that the rising colonial world was composed primarily of oppressed peoples who were not proletarians but who were nevertheless compelled because of their dual oppression by native and foreign rulers to overthrow their oppressors and institute a new economic, social, and political order. The one thing which Lenin was firm about, regardless of the conditions varying from country to country, was the need for a vanguard party whose members recognize the necessary difference between themselves and the revolutionary masses in terms of a firm ideology, programmatic commitment, and discipline, before they go to the masses to interact with them and give them leadership. If this distinction is blurred, what comes into being is not a revolutionary vanguard party but a mass party, however small in actual size, which incorporates into its membership those who should in fact be its followers and supporters. Such a party cannot lead the masses; it can only tailgate or follow after them.

For revolutionists all over the world, the study of Lenin is relevant, *not* from the standpoint of his analysis of the Russian working class as the main social force for the Russian Revolu-

tion, but for his concept of building a revolutionary vanguard party on the basis of that section of the population of a given country which is both the most oppressed and the chief revolutionary social force. If the working class constitutes the chief revolutionary social force in a particular country, the revolutionary party must be built on it. If the chief revolutionary social force is the peasantry, as in China, then base the party on the peasantry. If it is the black masses, as in the United States, then build the revolutionary party on the basis of the black revolutionary social forces.

RECOMMENDED READING

BY JAMES BOGGS:

The American Revolution: Pages from a Negro

Workers Notebook. Paperback \$1.65

Racism and the Class Struggle: Further Pages

from a Black Worker's Notebook. Cloth \$6.00

Manifesto for a Black Revolutionary Party \$.50

BY DAN ALDRIDGE:

Politics in Command of Economics \$.25

BY DEGINGA:

What Does It Mean to be Black? \$.25

What is Freedom?-- Who is the Enemy? \$.25

Concurrent Nationalism \$.25

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