

***Alliance for Workers' Liberty  
Education Bulletin***

# **THE COLLECTIVE ORGANISER**

**"A newspaper is not only a  
collective propagandist and a  
collective agitator, it is also a  
collective organiser."**

**Lenin**

**£2.50**



## The Collective Organiser

"The Communists... are on the one hand practically, the most advanced and resolute section of the working-class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others; on the other hand, theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the lines of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement."

Marx-Engels, *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*

Why do we produce a revolutionary newspaper? The question is inseparable from another: "why do we exist as a revolutionary Marxist organisation?"

The working class needs a revolutionary party with the ideas that can become a "material force". Ideas that once pushed to the fore in a class struggle will be transformed into strategies to combat the power of the bourgeoisie. Ideas which, taking in the history and experience of the working class struggle world wide, form an immense body of knowledge, irreplaceable in the struggle to reorganise a new world, one where inequality, exploitation and oppression has been abolished.

The AWL has always organised beyond our forces: in the trade unions, the student movement and on the left. We seek practical ways to advance the class struggle in the here and now. But we are far from being a mass organisation of workers. And we are not the party that will ultimately organise the workers to take power in the future. So what is the link between what we do now and the future struggle for workers' power? What is the link between the Marxist tendency that is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty and the mass workers' party of the future?

The link is the cadres of the AWL. We are a collective of life-long socialists who educate ourselves in the ideas of the past, renew those ideas in the struggles of the present and carry them forward into the future. And our ideas are quite distinct on the left. We stand for human solidarity, international working-class struggle, democratic self-organisation of the exploited class, while the rest of the left often gives up on the working class, preferring to adapt to populist movements of the "Third World", political Islam even.

So how do we keep alive, develop and sustain our ideas... and create new cadre? Through educating ourselves in the history of our movement, through fruitful activity that brings us into contact with new layers of activists and by *organising ourselves around our own literary products*. But the revolutionary paper is not just a product.

The slickest literary product is worthless unless it is *also a tool* which adequately explains the reality of the times in which we live. It needs to articulate, as Marx proposed over 150 years ago, "the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement."

People have always come to socialist ideas and socialist organisations from many directions. The conditions for winning new readers, finding friends and supporters and recruiting members are, in that sense, no different than they were thirty or a hundred years ago. Except we live in a world where the bourgeoisie is scarcely challenged by the so-called leaders of the labour movement. The authentic ideas of socialism have been irrevocably tainted by the stinking corruption of Stalinism. Although we are lucky in some ways — we have no secret police, no prison vans to dodge, no taxation on ideas — in other ways we have a tougher job today.

Nonetheless, a new layer of activists has been created in the various and diffuse elements of the "global justice" movement.

Some of the new activists will have a passionate interest in the great events of our time, a natural thirst for ideas and many question. Why put up with war perpetrated by the American hyper-power? What can be done to tackle the injustices and environmental damage of rampant global capitalism? Why is mainstream politics so deathly dull, so insubstantial, so disconnected with the lives of ordinary people. Why *is* the working class the agent of lasting change? Why is the anti-imperialism of the dominant left corrupted? What does the political tradition of Marxism say about these questions?

Our paper has to provide those answers. We aim to create and recreate a living Marxist analysis, responding to, analysing and explaining the events of our time through articles, reports, reviews and editorials. And our cadre? Our cadre has to organise, to go out and sell our literature, to fight for the ideas it contains, and to communicate our belief that we do have answers to the world as it exists we do have a vision of a future world. The paper is a tool for its members in the first place. It is the members that must argue through, clarify and reinforce the basic ideas of the AWL's programme.

This educational pamphlet discusses the linkage between the revolutionary party and the revolutionary paper "the collective organiser". The examples quoted here come from different historical experiences, but the linking theme is the idea that the revolutionary paper is, as Trotsky puts it, a "revolutionary instrument of the party."

Cathy Nugent, May 2004



## **Excerpt 1:** **“Win the cadres”**

From Isaac Deutscher, *Trotsky: The Prophet Armed*.

This excerpt, commenting on a newspaper which the non-Bolshevik Trotsky published before the First World War, sums up clearly a basic point which runs through most of the other excerpts in this selection: a revolutionary paper must be a tool, and not just a product.

It has to challenge the ideas of its readers, agitate them, educate them, and organise them. And, going against the grain of existing society, it depends on active supporters to push it, sustain it, carry its arguments forward by word of mouth, and to provide it with articles.

We must try to make our paper as good a “product” as we can; but the effort is largely wasted unless the paper becomes a “tool”.

## **Excerpt 2:** **“A collective organiser”**

From Lenin, *Where to Begin*.

Lenin was arguing the case for an all-Russian newspaper as the key tool to draw together the scattered local socialist groups then (1901) active in Russia into a coherent party. The paper, he wrote, should be “a collective organiser”: “the mere technical task of regularly supplying the newspaper with copy and of promoting regular distribution will necessitate a network of local agents... the skeleton of precisely the kind of organisation we need...”

In other words: a revolutionary paper needs a revolutionary party, just as a revolutionary party needs a revolutionary paper. But a revolutionary paper can be a collective organiser — that is, it can only be a really revolutionary paper — if those “mere technical tasks” are done!

## **Excerpt 3:** **“The Communist’s daily weapon”**

From Communist International, Third Congress, *Theses on Party Organisation*.

The Comintern, in 1921, was dealing with new Communist Parties which had often been formed by left-wing splits from the old Social-Democratic parties and mergers of old socialist groups, and which had inherited a ramshackle variety of publications.

The German socialist movement, for example, had had dozens of local and special newspapers. In other countries, many socialist papers and magazines operated as personal enterprises.

The Comintern argued for resources to be centralised, and the Communist Parties to aim for “a good... central paper”. Although our circumstances are vastly different from those of the big Communist Parties of 1921, one lesson from then is relevant to us now: the importance of concentrating effort on our central political publication, and not dispersing it on the wide variety of local and special publications which seem (as “products”) to offer quicker short-term successes but cannot (as “tools”) replace the central paper.

The Comintern theses go on to explain how the paper must function as a tool and not just a product.

## **Excerpt 4:** **“A communist cultural review”**

An editorial by Antonio Gramsci from *Ordine Nuovo*, 23 August 1919.

The notion of a “cultural review” — and one publishing studies on Leonardo da Vinci — seems to run against all the ideas of the paper being a tool rather than just a product. What Gramsci does here is explain why “a communist cultural review”, and not just a paper confined to politics in the narrow sense and to trade unionism, is a vital tool for building a party capable of leading a comprehensive, all-overturning social revolution.

## **Excerpt 5:** **“What is a mass paper?”**

From Trotsky, *The Crisis of the French Section* (1935-6).

When this article was written, the French Trotskyists had been working in the Socialist Party for 15 months, and faced moves by the SP leadership to expel them. Trotsky advocated that the Trotskyists should respond by bold defiance, try to pull as many activists out of the SP with them as they could, and aim for building a sizeable revolutionary party which would also draw in other revolutionary groups, for example dissidents from the Stalinist party.

A section of the French Trotskyist leadership, headed by Raymond Molinier, chose instead to get together with the “soft left” of the SP by launching a new so-called “mass paper”, called *La Commune*.

The GBL was the Trotskyist group. “Social patriot” means socialists who took a patriotic (nationalist) line on the coming World War. The “Revolutionary Left” was the “soft left” of the SP, and Marceau Pivert was its leader. “SAPist” means “soft left” (after a German group called SAP). Blum and Zyromsky were SP leaders. Magdeleine Paz was a rather pompous ex-Trotskyist. *L’Humanité* was the Stalinist paper. SFIO was the official name of the Socialist Party. The People’s Front was the alliance of the Communist Party and the Socialist Party with the (bourgeois) Radical Party on an “anti-fascist” programme: Trotsky denounced it as subordinating working-class militancy to the illusion of cross-class “anti-fascism”. *Revolution* was the paper of the Paris youth section of the SP, which was close to the Trotskyists; Fred Zeller was its leader. *La Vérité* was the Trotskyists’ own paper.

The core idea of the entire article is in the sentences: “It is the elementary duty of a revolutionary organisation to make its political newspaper as accessible as possible to the masses. This task cannot be effectively solved except as a function of the growth of the organisation and its cadres, who must pave the way to the masses for the newspaper...”

Notice: the cadres pave the way to the masses for the newspaper, not the newspaper paves the way to the masses for the cadres!

Trotsky’s argument is a demolition of the illusions behind such pseudo-“mass papers” as *socialist*, *News on Sunday*, and (in its different way) the old Healyite *Newsline*.

## **Excerpt 6:**

### **“Not to stop at agitational slogans”**

**From the founding conference of the Fourth International (1938), resolution on the tasks of the French Section.**

This excerpt reprises Trotsky's arguments (excerpt 5) in the form of a criticism of the paper the French Trotskyists were then publishing.

It ties together the need for more solid articles and polemics; the need “to adapt its language to that of the workers and peasants”; and the need for “permanent mobilisation” of all the Trotskyists round the paper — all aspects of the paper being a tool (a “material instrument”), not just a product.

Excerpts 5 and 6 together give the basic political argument for including in the paper a certain number of “heavy” or polemical articles which may be off-putting to some readers. If we made the paper very simple and agitational, it might bring more sales (though almost certainly not many: remember, the “cadres... must pave the way to the masses for the newspaper”), but it would certainly make the paper an inadequate tool for building a revolutionary party. (Trotsky: “I do not know if this newspaper would become, with the help of a magic wand, a mass paper. I doubt it. But it would in any event become a SAPist or Pivertist [i.e. soft-left, politically inadequate] paper”).

Certainly the paper must seek to arouse anger against anti-asylum legislation, the Government which waged war on Iraq and lied about its war aims and so on. But that is not all the paper should do, and not even the most important thing it must do.

Large numbers of people are angry about these things already. Indeed, anyone not angry about such things is unlikely even to consider reading our paper. And the paper must do more than reflect back to people the feelings they have already.

What we must try to contribute, irreplaceably, is political answers. Anger without answers is not effective: we can see all around us today that it can become resentful despair. Even anger plus struggle is not enough: the whole history of the labour movement is proof of that. To win even a sizeable strike generally requires educated, thoughtful leadership: to win the fight for socialism requires a sharp-honed revolutionary party.

Yes, but answers can be proposed and argued simply, and without polemic? The point is not just to have a few “experts” handing down packaged advice to the mass struggle, but to educate an organisation, and as large as possible a periphery around it, in such a way that they can fight effectively for the “answers”, find new answers to new situations as they arise, and become “experts” themselves.

If we are to do that, we must provide more than ready-for-use answers and neat supporting arguments. We must arm those whom we hope to get to fight for our proposals with arguments against the counter-proposals they will meet in the labour movement. We must examine the alternatives and show the process of reasoning which leads to one proposal and away from another which perhaps seems at first sight to respond just as well to the basic anger fuelling the struggle.

The answers need force and organisation behind them, or they are useless. To focus on recruitment and regard

political ideas as disposable gambits to help with recruiting — as the SWP does — is bad; but it is hardly any less sterile to focus on general political ideas and spurn concern with recruitment as “sectarian”. And the second alternative is a real danger. Time after time we have been right on political issues, but lacked the force to swing events decisively and also lacked the “party-building” edge to our work which could help us accumulate the force for next time.

Whether we like it or not, we have bigger competitors — like the SWP — for the allegiance of newly-radicalised socialists. Even if we regard all our polemics, arguments, and jousting with those groups as things we would like to avoid, we cannot avoid them except by giving up and joining the SWP — or giving up altogether!

At worst the polemics and so on are regrettable necessities: in fact if they are done halfway well, they are better than that. They are very important for our self-education and (provided “the cadres pave the way”) for educating and convincing people around us. After all, almost all the Marxist classics of greatest educational value were originally written as polemics against other socialists (and often against ones, like Dühring, whose names now live on only because of those polemics).

## **Excerpt 7:**

### **“A workers’ paper”**

**From Trotsky, *In Defence of Marxism*.**

Here again Trotsky argues that the revolutionary paper must be not just a product (“the task is not to make a paper through... a skilled editorial board”), but “a revolutionary instrument of the party”.

## **Excerpt 8:**

### **“Readers must pay for the paper”**

**From Cannon, *Letters From Prison*.**

Sometimes it seems that selling papers is too hard and difficult a way of doing political work: why don't we take a short cut by giving papers away free or doing more give-away leaflets? Cannon argues that there are political reasons why this short cut does not work — as well as the obvious financial ones!

## **Excerpt 9:**

### **“A combination tool”**

**From Cannon, *Letters from Prison*.**

Cannon is arguing for making the American Trotskyists' paper, *The Militant*, bigger and more popular, in a situation (1944) where their support was expanding very fast.

He restates, in different form, some of Gramsci's argument about a “communist cultural review”. And he argues that the paper must be popular, but “not... merely a popular paper”.

The whole argument is organised around the principle that “*The Militant* is a tool...”

## **Excerpt 1:**

### **“Win the cadres”**

From Isaac Deutscher, *Trotsky: The Prophet Armed*.

On the whole, *Pravda* was not one of Trotsky's great journalistic ventures. He intended to address himself to 'plain workers' rather than to politically-minded party men, and to 'serve not to lead' his readers.<sup>4</sup> *Pravda*'s plain language and the fact that it preached the unity of the party secured to it a certain popularity but no lasting political influence. Those who state the case for a faction or group usually involve themselves in more or less complicated argument and address the upper and medium layers of their movement rather than the rank and file. Those who say, on the other hand, that, regardless of any differences, the party ought to close its ranks have, as Trotsky had, a simple case, easy to explain and sure of appeal. But more

often than not this appeal is superficial. Their opponents who win the cadres of a party for their more involved argument are likely eventually to obtain the hearing of the rank and file as well; the cadres carry their argument, in simplified form, deeper down. Trotsky's calls for the solidarity of all Socialists were for the moment applauded by many—even the Bolsheviks in Petersburg reprinted his *Pravda*. But the same people who now applauded the call were eventually to disregard it, to follow the one or the other faction, and to leave the preacher of unity isolated. Apart from this, there was in Trotsky's popular posture, in his emphasis on plain talk and his promise to 'serve not to lead', more than a touch of demagogy, for the politician, especially the revolutionary, best serves those who listen to him by leading them.

## **Excerpt 2:**

### **“A collective organiser”**

From Lenin, *Where to Begin*.

A newspaper is what we most of all need; without it we cannot conduct that systematic, all-round propaganda and agitation, consistent in principle, which is the chief and permanent task of Social-Democracy in general and, in particular, the pressing task of the moment, when interest in politics and in questions of socialism has been aroused among the broadest strata of the population. Never has the need been felt so acutely as today for reinforcing dispersed agitation in the form of individual action, local leaflets, pamphlets, etc., by means of generalised and systematic agitation that can only be conducted with the aid of the periodical press. It may be said without exaggeration that the frequency and regularity with which a newspaper is printed (and distributed) can serve as a precise criterion of how well this cardinal and most essential sector of our militant activities is built up. Furthermore, our newspaper must be all-Russia. If we fail, and as long as we fail, to combine our efforts to influence the people and the government by means of the printed word, it will be utopian to think of combining other means, more complex, more difficult, but also more decisive, for exerting influence. Our movement suffers in the first place, ideologically, as well as in practical and organisational respects, from its state of fragmentation, from the almost complete immersion of the overwhelming majority of Social-Democrats in local work, which narrows their outlook, the scope of their activities, and their skill in the maintenance of secrecy and their preparedness. It is precisely in this state of fragmentation that one must look for the deepest roots of the instability and the waverings noted above. The *first* step towards eliminating this shortcoming, towards transforming divers local movements into a single, all-Russia movement, must be the founding of an all-Russia newspaper. Lastly, what we need is definitely a *political* newspaper. Without a political organ, a political movement deserving that name is inconceivable in the Europe of today. Without such a newspaper we cannot possibly fulfil our task—that of concentrating all the elements of political discontent and protest, of vitalising thereby the revolutionary movement of the proletariat. We have taken the first step, we have aroused in the working class a passion for “economic”, factory exposures; we must now take the next step, that of arousing in every section of the population that is at all politically conscious a passion for *political* exposure. We must not be discouraged by the fact that the voice of political exposure is today so feeble, timid, and infrequent. This is not because of a wholesale submission to police despotism, but because those who are able and ready to make exposures have no tribune from which to speak, no eager and encouraging audience, they do not see anywhere among the people that force to which it would be worth while directing their complaint against the “omnipotent” Russian Government. But today all this is rapidly changing. There is such a force—it is the revolutionary proletariat, which has demonstrated its readiness, not only to listen to and support the summons to political struggle, but boldly to engage in battle. We are now in a position to provide a tribune for the nation-wide exposure of the tsarist government, and it is our duty to do this. That tribune must be a Social-Democratic newspaper. The Russian working class, as distinct from the other classes and strata of Russian society, displays a constant interest in political knowledge and manifests a constant and extensive



demand (not only in periods of intensive unrest) for illegal literature. When such a mass demand is evident, when the training of experienced revolutionary leaders has already begun, and when the concentration of the working class makes it virtual master in the working-class districts of the big cities and in the factory settlements and communities, it is quite feasible for the proletariat to found a political newspaper. Through the proletariat the newspaper will reach the urban petty bourgeoisie, the rural handicraftsmen, and the peasants, thereby becoming a real people's political newspaper.

The role of a newspaper, however, is not limited solely to the dissemination of ideas, to political education, and to the enlistment of political allies. A newspaper is not only a collective propagandist and a collective agitator, it is also a collective organiser. In this last respect it may be likened to the scaffolding round a building under construction, which marks the contours of the structure and facilitates communication between the builders, enabling them to dis-

tribute the work and to view the common results achieved by their organised labour. With the aid of the newspaper, and through it, a permanent organisation will naturally take shape that will engage, not only in local activities, but in regular general work, and will train its members to follow political events carefully, appraise their significance and their effect on the various strata of the population, and develop effective means for the revolutionary party to influence those events. The mere technical task of regularly supplying the newspaper with copy and of promoting regular distribution will necessitate a network of local agents of the united party, who will maintain constant contact with one another, know the general state of affairs, get accustomed to performing regularly their detailed functions in the all-Russia work, and test their strength in the organisation of various revolutionary actions. This network of agents\* will form the skeleton of precisely the kind of organisation we need—one that is sufficiently large to embrace the whole country; sufficiently broad and many-sided to effect a strict and detailed division of labour; sufficiently well tempered to be able to conduct steadily *its own* work under any circumstances, at all "sudden turns", and in face of all contingencies; sufficiently flexible to be able, on the one hand, to avoid an open battle against an overwhelming enemy, when the enemy has concentrated all his forces at one spot, and yet, on the other, to take advantage of his unwieldiness and to attack him when and where he least expects it. Today we are faced with the relatively easy task of supporting student demonstrations in the streets of big cities; tomorrow we may, perhaps, have the more difficult task of supporting, for example, the unemployed movement in some particular area, and the day after we may have to be at our posts in order to play a revolutionary part in a peasant uprising. Today we must take advantage of the tense political situation arising out of the

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\* It will be understood, of course, that these agents could work successfully only in the closest contact with the local committees (groups, study circles) of our Party. In general, the entire plan we project can, of course, be implemented only with the most active support of the committees which have on repeated occasions attempted to unite the Party and which, we are sure, will achieve this unification—if not today, then tomorrow, if not in one way, then in another.

government's campaign against the Zemstvo; tomorrow we may have to support popular indignation against some tsarist bashi-bazouk on the rampage and help, by means of boycott, indictment demonstrations, etc., to make things so hot for him as to force him into open retreat. Such a degree of combat readiness can be developed only through the constant activity of regular troops. If we join forces to produce a common newspaper, this work will train and bring into the foreground, not only the most skilful propagandists, but the most capable organisers, the most talented political party leaders capable, at the right moment, of releasing the slogan for the decisive struggle and of taking the lead in that struggle.

In conclusion, a few words to avoid possible misunderstanding. We have spoken continuously of systematic, planned preparation, yet it is by no means our intention to imply that the autocracy can be overthrown only by a regular siege or by organised assault. Such a view would be absurd and doctrinaire. On the contrary, it is quite possible, and historically much more probable, that the autocracy will collapse under the impact of one of the spontaneous outbursts or unforeseen political complications which constantly threaten it from all sides. But no political party that wishes to avoid adventurous gambles can base its activities on the anticipation of such outbursts and complications. We must go our own way, and we must steadfastly carry on our regular work, and the less our reliance on the unexpected, the less the chance of our being caught unawares by any "historic turns".

Written in May 1901  
Published in *Iskra*  
No. 4, May 1901

Vol. 5

### Excerpt 3:

## **“The Communist’s daily weapon”**

From Communist International, Third Congress,  
*Theses on Party Organisation.*

### VI. On the Party Press

36 Constant effort must be made to develop and improve the Communist press.

No paper can be recognized as a Communist organ unless it is subject to *Party control*. This principle must be applied, within reason, to all Party publications, i.e., journals, papers, pamphlets etc., but control has to be exercised without affecting adversely their academic, propagandistic or other content. The Party must be concerned more with the quality than with the quantity of papers. The first priority for every Communist Party is to have a good and, wherever possible, daily *central paper*.

37 A Communist paper must never be run as a capitalist business in the way bourgeois papers and often the so-called “Socialist” papers are. Our papers must be *independent* of the capitalist credit institutions. Skilful use of advertising can substantially assist a paper’s finances—provided the Party is a legal mass party—but it must not lead to a paper becoming dependent on the large firms that place advertisements. Our papers will establish their authority by the uncompromising position they take on all proletarian social questions. Our papers must not try to satisfy the ‘public’s’ desire for sensation or light entertainment. They must not heed the criticisms of the petty-bourgeois authors and virtuosos of journalism or seek an entrée to these literary circles.

38 The Communist paper must concern itself first and foremost with the interests of the exploited and militant workers. It must be our best propagandist and agitator, the leading advocate of the proletarian revolution.

Our paper must aim to gather the valuable experience of all the members of the Party and disseminate this experience in the form of guide-lines so that Communist methods of work can be constantly revised and improved. Experiences must also be shared at meetings, attended by editors from all over the country; this exchange of opinion will also bring about maximum consistency in the tone and direction of the entire Party press. In this way the Party press and each individual

paper will be effective organizers of our revolutionary activity.

Unless the Communist papers and in particular the main paper are successful in their efforts to centralize and organize, it will scarcely be possible to achieve democratic centralism or an effective division of labour within the Communist Party and the Party will be unable to fulfil its historic task.

39 The Communist paper must strive to become a Communist undertaking, i.e., a *proletarian fighting organization*, an association of revolutionary workers, of all its regular contributors, type-setters, printers, administrators, distributors and sellers, and of those who collect local news, discuss and edit the material in the cells, etc.

A number of practical measures are required in order to make the paper a fighting organization and a real Communist association.

Each Communist should have close links with the paper for which he or she works and makes personal sacrifices. The paper is the Communist’s daily weapon which has to be constantly steeled and sharpened in order to be effective. Communist papers can only survive if Party members are prepared to make substantial and regular financial and material sacrifices. Members must see that the papers have a steady supply of funds for their organization and improvement until such time as the legal mass Parties achieve a position of strength and stability enabling them to exist independently and themselves offer the Communist movement material support.

The Communists must be more than just lively canvassers and agitators for the paper; they must be useful contributors. Everything that happens in the Communist fraction of the factory or in the cell, any event of social or economic importance, whether it be an accident at work or a factory meeting, the ill-treatment of apprentices or the

factory's financial report, must be communicated to the paper as quickly as possible. The fractions in the trade unions must collect all the important decisions and measures adopted by union meetings and union secretariats and any information on the type of activities our enemies are engaging in and send them to the paper. The round of meetings and the life of the street give the alert Party worker the opportunity to observe and critically evaluate various minor details which can be used in the paper to demonstrate clearly even to the workers who are indifferent to politics that we are in touch with their daily needs.

The editorial board must handle with particular care and feeling the reports on the life of working people and on workers' organizations, which can either be published as short articles to show that the paper is close to the life of working people or used as practical examples to illustrate Communist ideas—this is the best way to make the principles of Communism comprehensible to the broad working masses. Wherever

possible, the editorial board must at suitable times hold discussions with the workers who visit the editorial office, listen to the hopes and complaints they draw from their experience of life's hardships, note them down carefully and use them to make the paper more vital.

Under the capitalist system, it is true, none of our papers can become a perfect Communist working association. But even in the most unfavourable circumstances it is possible to organize a revolutionary workers' paper. The paper of our Russian comrades, *Pravda*, for the years 1912 and 1913 is an example of this. It represented a highly active organization of conscious revolutionary workers from the important centres of the Russian Empire. These comrades jointly edited, published and distributed this paper, most of them financing it from their own wages. The paper gave them what they wanted and what their movement needed at that time; it was an experience which is still of benefit to them today in their work and struggle. Members of the Party and many other revolutionary workers could look on such a paper as 'their own'.

40 Contributing to Party election campaigns is an integral part of the work of a militant Communist press. When the activity of the Party is focussed on some definite campaign, the Party paper must devote not just its leading political articles but as much space as necessary to the campaign. The editors must draw material in support of the campaign from all sources and design the paper's content and format so that this material can be presented in the most effective way.

41 *Subscriptions* for our papers must be collected very systematically. During periods when workers are joining the labour movement or when political or economic events are disrupting social life there are good opportunities for winning readers and the Communists should be able to make the best of them. When any large strike or lockout openly and energetically defended by the paper comes to an end, Communists should immediately persuade those who were on strike to take out individual subscriptions to the papers. Not only must Communists distribute *subscription* forms and carry out propaganda amongst the Communist fractions in the factories and trade unions during a strike but, wherever possible, they must develop a militant agitational campaign, visiting the homes of the workers who participated in the struggle.

It is also essential that after any political election campaign which has aroused the interest of the working masses in politics, special groups be set up to visit homes in the working-class areas.

At times of potential political and economic crises which affect the broad working masses through high prices, unemployment etc., Communists must make skilful propaganda around these issues. They must do everything in their power to obtain from the trade-union fractions detailed lists of the workers organized in trade unions and use them to approach these workers individually to win subscribers. Experience has

#### **Excerpt 4:**

### **“A communist cultural review”**

An editorial by Antonio Gramsci from *Ordine Nuovo*,  
23 August 1919.

**I**N this issue we begin the publication of a brief study of Leonardo da Vinci by Comrade Aldo Oberdorfer of Trieste, written on the occasion of da Vinci's fourth centenary to be celebrated this year. We feel sure our readers and friends will not be surprised, as this represents not a failure to live up to our purpose but a partial fulfilment of the aims we made clear from the start.

On other occasions we have already set out what we believe a paper, a Communist cultural review, should be. Such a paper must aim to become, in miniature, complete in itself, and, even though it may be unable to satisfy all the intellectual needs of the nucleus of men who read and support it, who live a part of their lives around it, and who impart to it some of their own life, it must strive to be the kind of journal in which everyone will find things that interest and move him, that will lighten the daily burden of work, economic struggle and political discussion. At the least, the journal should encourage the complete development of one's mental capacities for a higher and fuller life, richer in harmony and in ideological aims, and should be a stimulus for the development of one's own personality. Why cannot we ourselves, with our modest forces, begin the work of the education system, the education system of the future among the youth, who support us and look to us with so much faith and expectation? Because the socialist education system when it emerges will of necessity emerge as a complete system whose goal it will be to embrace quickly all branches of human knowledge. This will be a practical necessity and an intellectual requirement. Are there not already workers to whom the class struggle has given a new sense of dignity and liberty who—when they hear the poets' songs and the names of artists and thinkers—ask bitterly: “Why haven't we, too, been taught these things?” But they console themselves: “Schools, as organised over the last ten years, as organised today by the ruling classes, teach little or nothing.” The aim is to meet educational needs by different means: freely, through spontaneous relations between men moved by a common desire to improve themselves. Why couldn't a paper become the centre for one of these groups? In this field, too, the bourgeois régime is on the verge of bankruptcy. From its hands, calloused from their sole work of accumulating private wealth, the torch of science and the sacred lamp of life have fallen. Ours is the task of taking them up, ours the task of making them glow with new light.

In the accumulation of ideas transmitted to us by a millenium of work and thought there are elements which have eternal value, which cannot and must not perish. The loss of consciousness of these values is one of the most serious signs of degradation brought about by the bourgeois régime; to them everything becomes an object of trade and a weapon of war.

The proletariat, having conquered social power, will have to take on the work of reconquest, to restore in full for itself and all humanity the devastated realm of the spirit. This is what the Russian workers, guided by Maxim Gorky, are doing today; this must begin to be done wherever the proletariat is approaching the maturity necessary for social change. The decay at the top must be replaced by new, stronger life from below.

shown that the last week of the month is the best time for this kind of canvassing work. Any local group that has not tried during this period at least once in a year is letting a good opportunity slip by.

Paper-sellers should not miss a single workers' meeting or demonstration; they should sell subscriptions before, during and after the event.

The trade-union fractions must sell papers at all meetings of the cells and the factory fractions as well as at the general factory meetings.

42 Party members must also defend the paper against its enemies. All Party members must also defend the paper against the capitalist press, exposing and criticizing the way it distorts and suppresses information.

We must get the better of the social-democratic and independent socialist press by a constant offensive, which should not however degenerate into a petty polemic. The many examples from everyday life must be used to show up the disgusting attempts to smooth over the manifold social contradictions. Our fractions in the trade unions and other organizations must do all they can to liberate the members of the trade unions and other workers' organizations from the misleading and harmful influence of the social-democratic press. Our campaign to win subscribers by both house-to-house and factory agitation must involve a direct attack on the press of the social-traitors.

## Excerpt 5:

### “What is a mass paper?”

From Trotsky, *The Crisis of the French Section* (1935-6).

To the Members of the Bolshevik-Leninist Group:

I have just learned that my letter to the Political Bureau on the new “mass paper” [“Turn to the Masses!”] was read to the general meeting. I can only rejoice if it succeeded in clarifying the situation a little. I addressed myself first to the Political Bureau in the hope that the question could be solved without a new discussion on the foundations determined by the last national conference. But it developed that the initiators of *La Commune*, after having prepared their undertaking outside the organization, and in fact against both the national and international organizations, decided to provoke a discussion after the fait accompli. In these circumstances it would perhaps not be without value if I enlarged in a more precise manner upon the criticisms and suggestions contained in my letter to the Political Bureau.

1. What is a “mass paper”? The question is not new. It can be said that the whole history of the revolutionary movement has been filled with discussions on the “mass paper.” It is the elementary duty of a revolutionary organization to make its political newspaper as accessible as possible to the masses. This task cannot be effectively solved except as a function of the growth of the organization and its cadres, who must pave the way to the masses for the newspaper—since it is not enough, of course, to call a publication a “mass paper” for the masses to really accept it. But quite often revolutionary impatience (which becomes transformed easily into opportunist impatience) leads to this conclusion: The masses do not come to us because our ideas are too complicated and our slogans too advanced. It is therefore necessary to simplify our program, water down our slogans—in short, to throw out some ballast. Basically, this means: Our slogans must correspond not to the objective situation, not to the relation of classes, analyzed by the Marxist method, but to subjective assessments (extremely superficial and inadequate ones) of what the “masses” can or cannot accept. But what masses? The mass is not homogeneous. It develops. It feels the

pressure of events. It will accept tomorrow what it will not accept today. Our cadres will blaze the trail with increasing success for our ideas and slogans, which will be shown to be correct, because they are confirmed by the march of events and not by subjective and personal assessments.

2. A mass paper is distinguished from a theoretical review or from a journal for cadres not by the *slogans* but by the *manner in which they are presented*. The cadre journal unfolds for its readers all the steps of the Marxist analysis. The mass paper presents only its results, basing itself at the same time on the immediate experience of the masses themselves. *It is far more difficult to write in a Marxist manner for the masses than it is to write for cadres.*

3. Let us suppose for a moment that the GBL consented to “simplify” our program, to renounce the slogans for the new party and for the Fourth International, to renounce implacable criticism of the social patriots (naming them by name), to renounce systematic criticism of the Revolutionary Left and of Pivert personally. I do not know if this newspaper would become, with the help of a magic wand, a mass paper. I doubt it. But it would in any event become a *SAPist* or *Pivertist* paper. The essence of the Pivert tendency is just that: to accept “revolutionary” slogans, but not to draw from them the necessary conclusions, which are the break with Blum and Zyromsky, the creation of the new party and the new International. Without

that, all the "revolutionary" slogans become null and void. At the present stage the Pivert agitation is a sort of opium for the revolutionary workers. Pivert wants to teach them that one can be for revolutionary struggle, for "revolutionary action" (to borrow a phrase now in vogue), and remain at the same time on good terms with chauvinist scum. Everything depends on your "tone," you see? It is the tone that makes the music. If the tiger cooed like a pigeon the whole world would be enchanted. But we, with our rude language, we must say that *the leaders of the Revolutionary Left are demoralizing and prostituting revolutionary consciousness.*

I ask you: If we renounced the slogans which are dictated by the objective situation, and which constitute the very essence of our program, in what shall we be distinguished from the Pivertists? In nothing. We would only be second-rate Pivertists. But if the "masses" should have to decide for the Pivertists, they would prefer the first-rate to the second.

4. I take up the little appeal printed for "*La Commune*—organ of revolutionary (?) action (?)." This document provides us with a striking demonstration (unsought by its authors) of some of the ideas expressed above. "*La Commune* will speak the language of the factories and the fields. It will tell of the misery which reigns there; it will express its passions and rouse to revolt."

This is a very laudable intention, although the masses know perfectly well their own misery and their feelings of revolt (stifled by the patriotic apparatuses with the aid of the Pivertists). What the masses can demand of a newspaper is *a clear program and a correct orientation.* But precisely on this question the appeal is utterly silent. Why? Because it wants more to conceal its ideas than to express them. It accepts the SAPist (centrist) recipe: in seeking the line of least resistance *do not say what is.* The program of the Fourth International, that's for "us," for the big shots of the leadership. And the masses? What are the masses? They can rest content with a quarter, or even a tenth, of the program. This mentality we call elitism, of both an opportunist and, at the same time, an adventurist type. It is a very dangerous attitude, comrades. It is not the attitude of a Marxist.

We find in the appeal, after the sentence quoted, a number of historical reminiscences: "To the sons and grandsons of the fighters of the Croix-Rousse, of those who manned the barricades of June 1848,<sup>12</sup> of the Communards of 1871, *La Commune* says," etc. (followed by rhetoric à la Magdeleine Paz). I do not know, truly, if the rebelling masses need literary reminiscences and somewhat hollow rhetoric disguised as a program.

But here is where the most important part begins: "*La Commune* is not going to add itself to the multiplicity of tendencies in the workers' movement." What sovereign scorn for the "multiplicity" of existing tendencies! What does that mean? If all the tendencies are wrong or insufficient, a new one has to be created, the true one, the correct one. If there are true and false tendencies, then the workers must be taught to distinguish among them. The masses must be called on to join the correct tendency to fight the false ones. But no, the initiators of *La Commune*, somewhat like Romain Rolland, place themselves "above the battle." Such a procedure is absolutely unworthy of Marxists.

After this a number of names are proclaimed in order to particularize, however little, the utterly vague character of the new paper. I set aside my own name, which *La Commune* claims without the slightest justification. Being among the living, I can at least defend myself. But the others, our common teachers, the real leaders of revolutionary socialism? Unfortunately, they are defenseless. The appeal names Marx and Blanqui. What does



that mean? Do they want to create a new "synthesis" of Marxism and Blanquism? How will the masses disentangle themselves from the combination of these two names? A little farther on we find Lenin. But the Stalinists claim him also. If you do not explain to the masses that you are against the Stalinist tendency, they will have to prefer *l'Humanité* to *La Commune*. This combination of names explains nothing. It only extends and deepens the ambiguity.

And here is the high point: "*La Commune* is launched by militants belonging to various tendencies to bring about the rise of a great army of communards." What does this mean, this unknown crew of anonymous, unknown "various tendencies"? What tendencies are involved? Why are they (still unknown) grouped outside and against the other tendencies? The purpose of creating a "great army of communards" is laudable. But it is necessary not to forget that this army, once created (1871), suffered a terrific catastrophe because that magnificent army lacked a program and a leadership.

The conclusion: The appeal could have been written by Marceau Pivert (in collaboration with Magdeleine Paz) except for one point—the name of the author of these lines. But as for me, I repeat, I am implacably opposed to this equivocal and anti-Marxist appeal.

5. The adherence of the GBL to the SFIO has proved absolutely correct. It was a step forward. The Mulhouse congress was the high point of the Bolshevik-Leninist influence in the SFIO. It was necessary to understand that the limit of the possibilities within the Socialist Party was being reached (at least for the adults). It was necessary to utilize the newly won and fresh authority to influence new and virgin elements outside the Socialist Party, whose social composition is miserable. It is this suggestion which I expressed in a letter since published in an internal bulletin of the GBL (no. 6, letter of June 10), and which I permit myself to recommend to the comrades for rereading in connection with the present letter. Passing through Paris [on the way to Norway] I met with several comrades, especially some of the future promoters of *La Commune*, who were in strong opposition to the idea of a new turn. These comrades had taken a liking to their activity in reformist and centrist circles and hoped to be able to progress further and further. It was a mistake. Time and strength were wasted fruitlessly instead of emulating the youth, whose orientation was more correct because it was directed toward the young workers outside the Socialist Party.

Then came the expulsions at Lille. I, for my part, regarded them as an act of liberation, because they expressed the reality: *the impossibility of fruitful future activity in the ranks of the SFIO*, especially with the approach of war and fusion with the Stalinists. It seemed that the fact of the expulsion was so eloquent as to spare us the need for any discussion as to what road to take. It was necessary to open up a vigorous and implacable offensive against the expellers, not as "splitters" (that's the small talk of Pivert), but primarily as the valets of French imperialism. It was necessary at the same time to criticize Pivert openly, since he had taken the place of Zyromsky in covering the left wing of the People's Front. It was necessary to develop the program of *committees of action*, to oppose collaboration with the Radicals, and to proclaim openly the necessity for preparing a *new party* to save the proletariat and its younger generation. Instead of that, the *Commune* group sought above all to win the sympathies of the Revolutionary Left by personal maneuvering, by combinations in the lobbies, and above all by abdication of our slogans and of criticism of the centrists. Marceau Pivert declared two or three months ago that the struggle against "Trotskyism" is the sign of a reactionary tendency. But now he himself, led by the SAP people, represents this reactionary tendency. *The Revolutionary Left has become the most immediate and most noxious obstacle in the development of the revolutionary vanguard.* That is what has to be said

openly and everywhere, i.e., especially in a mass newspaper. But the *Commune* group has gone so far in its romance with the Pivertists that one is forced to ask if these comrades are still with us or if they have passed over to centrist positions. That is where one gets when one throws principles overboard and adapts oneself longer than is necessary to the reformist apparatus and its centrist valets.

6. We may ask: and *Révolution*? It is also not the paper of our tendency. Nevertheless we participate in it. That is correct, but *Révolution* is the paper of an organization which everybody knows—the Young Socialists. The newspaper is led by *two tendencies* which are drawing close and which must inevitably fuse. The progressive character of the Revolutionary Socialist Youth is determined precisely by this fact: that they are turning toward the Bolshevik-Leninists and not toward the Revolutionary Left. (The episodic adherence of Comrade Zeller to the Revolutionary Left, after all that had happened, was a mistake the responsibility for which must be shared by the *Commune* group.)

*Révolution* is a living, moving paper which can become the paper of the proletarian youth. To accomplish this task, however,

*Révolution* must not fall into the shadows of *La Commune*'s confusion, but must concretize its position—i.e., definitively accept the slogans of the Bolshevik-Leninists.

7. *La Vérité* is an absolute necessity. But it must liberate itself from the centrist influences which resulted in the appeal of *La Commune*. *La Vérité* must resume its fighting, intransigent character. The most important object of its criticism is Pivertism, which is opposed to Leninism and has thus become, by its own characterization, a reactionary tendency.

8. I do not want to analyze in this letter the extraordinary methods employed by the *Commune* group vis-à-vis its own national and international tendency. It is a very important question but nevertheless secondary in comparison with the question of program and banner.

I believe, dear comrades, that you have the greatest opportunities before you. You are at last going to reap the fruits of your efforts up to now, but on one condition: that you do not permit a confusion of tendencies, of ideas and banners; that you practice Leninist intransigence more than ever and orient yourselves openly and vigorously toward the new party and the Fourth International.

L. Trotsky

## Excerpt 6:

### **“Not to stop at agitational slogans”**

From the founding conference of the Fourth International (1938), resolution on the tasks of the French Section.

*The Lutte Ouvriere*

The *Lutte Ouvriere*, in trying to become a so-called "mass newspaper," has become too superficial—indeed, even boring. The stupid ideology held on this subject was such that certain party members even objected to publishing Trotsky's articles sometimes on the grounds that they were too long and incomprehensible for the masses, sometimes that they were too violent against the Stalinists. The editorship, especially at the beginning, was thereby paralyzed by the fear of falling under the blows of such criticisms. A certain improvement in recent months, from this point of view, ought to be noted.

The result has been that there has been an alienation from *La Lutte* of those vanguard readers who used to find in our organ serious revolutionary news from the national and international point of view as well as an instrument for Marxist education which took daily events as a starting point. Working class readers found no substantial answer to their troubles

in its hastily edited articles. Our organ thus abandoned its mission as an educator of the cadres and builder of the Fourth International.

Furthermore it is apparent that the articles in *La Lutte* were often written without much attention either to form or content. The language is not the result of a conscious effort to adapt the articles to the workers' concerns; and is on that very account abstract and devoid of straightforwardness. It is important to remedy this state of affairs as quickly as possible, the more so inasmuch as a serious organization of this work would make it possible to obtain fruitful results, in view of the possibilities in this field.

First of all, it is necessary to fight against the stupid and primitive ideology which has crept in under the borrowed label of "mass newspaper." It is time to learn the lesson of the French experience on this point, in the spirit of the excellent brochure by our lamented Comrade Erwin Wolf. A real mass newspaper is one which tries to take as its starting point daily happenings, to bring explanations of them and slogans about them to the workers, and first of all to the advanced workers, to the vanguard. The basis of the news should be objective events in the factories, on the farms, etc., up-to-date national and international political news, clearly expressed and analyzed. But this aim is above all interrelated with the aim of the party itself: to forge cadres, provide the explanation of the situation, and not to stop at merely agitational slogans which, lacking explanation and political generalization, are powerless to make the best workers understand the Fourth International's reason for existence, just at the moment when, disgusted with bureaucrats and with the Popular Front, they are looking for a new way out. In the second place, the editing of *La Lutte* must be completely reorganized to facilitate supervision by the International on the one hand and the rank and file on the other. One means of supervision will be the giving up of anonymity, with the exception of the editorial and of certain party articles. Subjects [departments] will be divided among various members, and the leading articles will be signed, either with names or with pseudonyms. By its supervision the editorship will press for a deeper study of questions and for specialization. It shall be arranged to have one day intervene between the delivery of the articles to the editors and their delivery to the printer,

to allow correction and selection. Failures will be communicated to the entire party. Each local group of the Parisian Region shall be permitted to send a delegate to the plenary meeting of the editorial board. Thus every time that a certain spirit

of "the hell with it" camouflaged itself behind the spirit of collective anonymous communism, recourse was had to the old procedures for supervision and competition. Finally the editorship shall make a deliberate effort to adapt its language to that of the workers and peasants. It is true that only stubborn and fruitful work in the factories and trade unions, involving practical collaboration in the vanguard organ by workers who are actually engaged in the struggle, can produce a really radical change in the paper's language and tone. Nevertheless, far from merely waiting passively for this change, which is properly the work of the party, the editors in reporting the daily events and the lessons of the struggle should systematically try to obtain the direct participation of those who are taking part in that struggle, with all their interests and language. In a word, the organ of the POI is its material instrument for agitation, information, education, i.e., the building of the Fourth International.

To keep up its regular weekly appearance is an *absolute duty*.

#### *Newspaper—Management*

Despite certain individual efforts, it can be said that on the whole the leadership let the whole administrative and financial work of the paper fall on one single administrative functionary, without creating around the commission of management that spirit of "permanent mobilization" of the whole party which would have enabled it to find financial resources and material aid. The result has been that financial stability based on pledges has been progressively endangered, and that on the other hand material aids in administrative tasks failed one by one.

Taking into account the putting into practice of the financial measures recommended above, the leadership of the POI should take the running of the paper in hand as a cardinal task, draw up a plan of reorganization on the occasion of the party convention, have the branches discuss it, appeal to their spirit of emulation and devotion; guarantee the daily supervision of the execution of these tasks, and the public nature of this supervision, throughout the entire party. It is necessary within three months from the date of the convention to undertake a campaign to double the number of subscribers and readers. And this is a matter, not so much of offering prizes, as of having good articles and good documentary investigations.

### **Excerpt 7:**

### **“A workers’ paper”**

From Trotsky, *In Defence of Marxism*.

On May 27, 1939, I again wrote concerning the character of the *Socialist Appeal* in connection with the social composition of the party:

‘From the minutes I see that you are having difficulty with the *Socialist Appeal*. The paper is very well done from the journalistic point of view; but it is a paper for the workers and not a workers’ paper. . . .

‘As it is, the paper is divided among various writers, each of whom is very good, but collectively they do not permit the workers to penetrate to the pages of the *Appeal*. Each of them speaks for the workers (and speaks very well) but nobody will hear the workers. In spite of its literary brilliance, to a certain degree the paper becomes a victim of journalistic routine. You do not hear at all how the workers live, fight, clash with the police or drink whiskey. It is very dangerous for the paper as a revolutionary instrument of the party. The task is not to make a paper through the joint forces of a skilled editorial board but to encourage the workers to speak for themselves.

**Excerpt 8:**

**“Readers must pay for the paper”**

From Cannon, *Letters From Prison*.

The principle that readers must *pay* for the paper is a sound one; people are inclined to put a higher value on things they pay for, even if it is a very small amount, than on throwaway sheets which they get for nothing. I believe all experienced organizers recognize that throw-away leaflets are the most expensive and least productive of all propaganda methods. That, however, does not prevent some people, who have not yet formed the habit of thinking and weighing experience, from periodically making excited proposals for free leaflet distribution as a panacea. But, nevertheless, experience has also shown that it is *the principle of paying*, not the *amount* paid, that is most important. The two should not be confused and lumped together.

It is not our task to vindicate a commercial principle but to assure the widest possible distribution of our paper to people who value it enough to read it. As said, that is best guaranteed if they pay something for it. But then comes a second proposition to whose validity all contemporary publishing experience testifies. That is, that once the principle of payment is firmly established, the paper must be sold at a cheap price in order to attain a wide circulation; the cheaper, the better.

## **Excerpt 9:** **“A combination tool”**

From Cannon, *Letters from Prison*.

Sandstone, December 28, 1944

We need and must have an eight-page paper now, not because there is any magic in the figure eight and not because this is the right size for a paper under all circumstances, but because it can be best adapted to the specific tasks which our press must serve at the present time, and is within our prospective means.

The decisions we make on such questions as the size and frequency of issue of a paper, as on all other so-called practical questions, should be as carefully reasoned as our political decisions. This is one of the surest signs of the introduction of professionalism, i.e., consciousness into our work. *The Militant* is a tool which in the past served primarily, almost exclusively, the task which the circumstances of the time obliged us to concentrate on: the recruitment and education of a cadre of the most advanced political elements. It is quite obvious that the whole objective situation is changing now, and therefore with the position of our party within it.

The tasks and the opportunities of the party are changing. The press must be regulated accordingly. We all recognize this. But we can waste a lot of energy and neglect many opportunities if we see the new problems only "in general" and make a haphazard adjustment of the press to them. We should examine the new problem closely and try to make as *precise* an adjustment of the press as possible.

Viewing *The Militant* as a tool, I should like to refine the definition by saying that, in the next period, it must serve us as a *combination* tool which can be used on several different jobs. I believe this qualification is very important.

The paper, for the first time, is getting a good reception from masses of workers without previous political education or interest. The majority of its readers at the present moment are new people, and it is to be expected that this majority will become larger. *The Militant* must serve this new audience, adapt itself to the stage of their political development, under penalty of losing their interest.

This dictates a new journalistic technique. Our language and our arguments must be simplified and made more accessible to the new type of reader. This does not mean to vulgarize, to talk down in *Labor Action* fashion, but to study and learn the art of popularizing our propaganda. It is an art and it can be learned and practiced without revising or watering down a single basic principle. The problem is one of *presentation*, with the new readers in mind. They are only, for the most part, newly interested, only partly interested, and the paper must be lightened up and brightened up in order to hold their interest and lead them into deeper studies. The paper has improved enormously along this line during the past year, but we must keep the direction clear and go farther.

I have no doubt that a "Gallup poll" would show conclusively that the cartoons and drawings and the new feature columns account to a great degree for the increased popularity of the paper. With the increased space which the eight-pager will provide we must try deliberately to make further advances along this line. More cartoons and drawings; more light features, especially *short* features; more effort to give *information* not found elsewhere; more studied effort to convey our ideas in small doses, subtly and sometimes indirectly, for the average worker doesn't like to be pounded over the head with direct arguments in every article and every headline.

\* \* \*

For the benefit of the new reader we must tell the history of the movement over and over again, dramatizing the great events and personalities of the past, in order to build up one of the most powerful supporting ideas any movement can have—the idea of *tradition*.

Man does not live by argument alone. He needs a variety of interest; color; entertainment; information; drama; recollection of things past, especially where these recollections bring human personalities into view. The more and better the paper is dressed up with these variations on the theme of communism the better will the paper be liked, and the more surely will the first interest of the new readers be drawn into firm convictions and grateful devotion to the paper which has opened for them a window on a new rich world.

The eight-page paper will give us more room, but it should not be used merely to add sixteen more columns of the same. The aim should be primarily to add greater variety. We should experiment with sketches and stories about *people*. That is mainly what the "Diary of a Steel Worker" consists of, and that is why it is so popular. Not everybody understands it, but people like to read about people.

We here have discussed the idea of reprinting in serial form the socialist and labor novels of the past. We will have room for it, and I believe the plates or serial rights could be secured for very small amounts. We thought the new generation would be interested in *The Jungle*, *The Iron Heel*, *Pelle the Conqueror*, Gorky's *Mother*, *Comrade Yetta*, etc. In fact we know it. An earlier generation of social rebels were profoundly moved and influenced by these stories. Their children and grandchildren are no different.

The dominant notes of the eight-page paper must be *simplification* and *agitation*, i.e., concentrated hammering on a very few basic slogans of the day. These are the indispensable characteristics of a popular paper. But—and here is the catch, here is the main reason we need a bigger paper—our *Militant* cannot be *merely* a popular paper even if every line of its contents is irreproachably correct as far as it goes.

*The Militant* must strive to be a *combination* paper; a paper which interests and serves the needs of the new reader who picks it up for the first time, the reader who is beginning to think of himself as a Trotskyist without yet thinking about the party, and the educated party militant—all at the same time. If we get this conception clearly in our heads we will be able to avoid some of the most costly errors of the past and close big gaps



through which many thousands of potential socialists slipped away from the movement in the past.

We can only afford to publish one paper. And we must address ourselves to the politically educated as well as to the uninitiated. And we must also remember that between the best posted party member of years of study and experience and the new reader there are numerous strata in different degrees of development. And we must publish a paper for all of them. Most important of all, we must bear in mind that the new reader does not remain a new reader all his life. The average intelligent worker quickly absorbs the few simple ideas which attracted him to the paper in the first place. Then he begins to feel the need of more substantial food.

An agitational paper which does not lead him from the first reader to the second, and then still higher, in time becomes monotonous. He doesn't feel the need of mere "agitation" so strongly on matters on which he is already convinced; and may even get tired of it and fall back into passivity and indifference unless he is led, step by step, into the deeper questions of Marxism with the ever new and ever changing variety of interests aroused by their presentation and discussion.

Precisely here was the Achilles' heel of the old *Appeal to Reason*. Its unrivaled agitation on a few simple points, and its sensational exposures, made the *Appeal* very attractive to thousands of new readers who were making the first break in their allegiance to the bourgeois parties. But the *Appeal* left them, so to speak, on the first step of the ladder, never raised them higher. The readers, after a spell of enthusiasm, got tired of the singsong which they already knew by heart and fell away. At a certain stage of its development, the *Appeal* was confronted with the life-and-death problem of getting new thousands of readers to take the place of other thousands who were falling away.

I know all this very well because I was one of them. It was my good fortune to discover the IWW and the new problems of theory and tactics raised by it, and to get an introduction into Marxist economics at the old Socialist Educational Society in Kansas City, just at the time I was beginning to feel that the *Appeal to Reason* had nothing more to teach me.

My case was rather typical. Most of the militants I knew in those days had gone through the *Appeal to Reason* school. But the point is, they had gone *through* it. I finally stopped reading the *Appeal* altogether. Occasionally, when I picked it up later, it lacked the old interest for me. The *Appeal* was too simple, too exclusively agitational, to hold the continuing interest of a developing militant and aid his further education.

Of course, this example may appear to be exaggerated, insofar as it expresses the conditions of the time and the general ideological poverty of the old movement. But it is worth mentioning in any case, if only as a "horrible example." We are a head taller than the movement from which we grew, but that puts upon us the obligation to use our head. We must try to do everything understandingly, consciously. Applied to *The Militant*, this means among other things, that we should deliberately plan it as a variegated combination paper which has something in it of special interest to all of its readers in all stages of their development; which conducts the new reader by stages from agitation on the burning issues of the day into all the more profound questions of the class and the party, and continues to interest him after he has assimilated them.

The capitalist press solves the problem of attracting and holding readers of different social strata and different interests in its own way. Their prescription is simple: They provide a great variety of departments and features ranging from comic strips and crossword puzzles to market reports and the society column. Something for everybody. They even have editorials and some people read them.

In our own way, and for our own purposes, and with our own resources, we should follow this pattern. But for that we need eight pages.