

Introduction to “The Myth of the Party”

Fifth Estate Collective

1991

The article appearing on the following two pages, “The Myth of the Party,” by Murray Bookchin (from his essay “Listen Marxist”) was first excerpted in FE #272, May 1976. We reprint it hoping it will be of interest to a new generation of anti-war and social activists who find themselves beset by the return of the living dead—marxist-leninist parties.

With all of marxism’s “real existing” models of state socialism exposed as deadly police state apparatuses, one would think leninists would skulk off realizing what a dreadful mistake all they advocated had become. But, no, they’re back with renewed vigor bearing the same flawed ideology, still admiring their own particular counter-revolutionary mass murderer—Lenin, Trotsky, Mao, Stalin—hoping the current anti-war resistance will bring fresh blood into their tired cadres.

Leninist organizations are more than just a nuisance: they ruin meetings with their manipulative attempts to control them, they show up at demonstrations with enough signs and literature to give the impression they are the sponsors, and, like vampires, latch onto people new to the movement.

Each leninist sect comes with a supreme leader for life who dreams it will be he (it’s always a he) who will lead the “masses” (that hideous marxoid term which reduces all individuals to a single manipulative element, subject to the party’s will), and a membership with a faster turnover than a McDonald’s franchise.

Leninists have the look and style of airport Moonies as they try to shove their boring newspapers on you, shout stupid slogans through deafening bullhorns and, like relentless encyclopedia salesmen, keep calling your house urging you to come to their meetings. All of their party names contain at least one of the words, “workers” or “socialist” or “communist” or “revolutionary,” but their methods and organization connect them more with the authoritarian right than with the historic, visionary 19th century meaning of those words.

The value of “The Myth of the Party” is that it kicks out the historical and the theoretical struts from under the leninists’ braggadocio about being “the party of the revolution.” Revolutionaries don’t need a party except for the one we’ll have when we get rid of capitalism, the state, and all political authority.



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