

TO ALL CC MEMBERS:

ROLE OF THE IC/CC; SOME THEORETICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL ISSUES

Comrades,

At the end of November a CC meeting was held in which efforts were made to place the two line struggle on a higher level, to break with the factional activity of the old Secretariat, and to move toward breaking with what the majority of the CC held was a "left" deviation in the organization as a whole. As a result a new IC was formed, the struggle was summed up to date in the document Summary of the Central Committee Meeting of the BWC Nov 29-Dec 3, and a plan was developed by the IC to carry on the struggle (IC Document dated 20 December, 1974).

Comrades, as events unfolded, it has become clear to this comrade that the IC, nor the CC, has yet to break with the "left" line. That the CC and the IC continues to hold an incorrect political line on the responsibility of the leading bodies, and how the struggle should be conducted. It is this incorrect line that this paper is directed toward. This criticism is offered not because the "blame must be established," nor to deny the tireless efforts by many comrades on behalf of the whole organization during this period, but because it is critical that the CC now assume its proper responsibility if the BWC is to progress along a proletarian path.

Comrade Mac proposes in Reform Our Study that leading bodies have a twofold basic task; to know conditions, or to know the world; and to master policy, to change the world. In this regard, this comrade believes that it is in the area of mastering policy, of providing general and particular guidance, that the IC/CC has been most negligent. On the other hand, efforts have been made by the IC to investigate the situation in the organization, to listen to cadre, and in general, has proceeded from the masses, to the masses. The weak link, however, is to the masses. Here are a few examples:

- 1/ The formulation of the two deviations in the Summary document. The formulation of "Ideological" as well as the blurring of any distinctions between political and organizational manifestations reveals a basic lack of clarity on the part of the leading body around fundamental concepts of Marxism-Leninism. What is described as "ideological" are in fact mostly theoretical problems. The ideological source of such errors stems from a certain world view, ie bourgeoisie or petty bourgeoisie ideology. There is no distinction between political or organizational manifestations, which again promotes confusion rather than clarity. Furthermore, the description of the Minority position is extremely inadequate, and it appears that no real effort was even made to give an all sided description of the struggle. In short, that this summary on the part of the IC or CC (which is note stated) reflects the confusion of many comrades on exactly what a deviation is all about, on the distinction between ideology and theory (this distinction is taken up in detail later), etc.

2/ The Bibliography dated December 24, 1975, revealed the general lack of clarity on the part of the IC around the important questions to address. The bibliography, as noted in the Document of Feb 3, 1975 from the IC, was so general, so vague, that it again was of limited assistance to cadre, and did not move the struggle forward.

3/ The plan for the struggle outlined in the Document of Dec 20, 1975 has been discarded without any communication to the cadre of this organization as to why, what will replace it, or what is happening in the organization. It is now six weeks since we were supposed to receive papers from the CC, and there has been no communication directly to cadre explaining the situation.

4/ And one further example of how the previous incorrect line of leadership has not been broken with, cadre in this District are still in the unfortunate position of learning more about the work of the BWC from cadre of other organizations and the pages of the Guardian than from the leadership of our own organization. For example, information on our relations with OL, IWK, etc, comes first from OL cadre to us, telling us what is happening nationally. Furthermore, work of the BWC in such areas as the Black Womens United Front, The DhoFar Conference in Chicago, the Atlanta conference on the Boycott of South African Coal... to name only a few, were all learned about by this comrade through cadre of other organizations or in the pages of the Guardian.

Hopefully the point should be adequate to realize that while we may have taken some steps to break with the old incorrect line, we have barely begun to crawl in this regard. Comrades, in assessing the work of the IC/CC in this period, one formulation by Mao in Some Questions Concerning the Methods of Leadership might be taken as a measure:

It is the art of leadership to take the whole situation into account and plan accordingly in the light of the historical conditions and existing circumstances in each locality, decide correctly on the center of gravity and the sequence of work for each period, steadfastly carry through the decision, and make sure that definite results are achieved.

While this comrade nor any other comrade would want to underestimate the difficulties in this period, both the objective pressures from the situation in Detroit, and the lack of subjective development resulting from new comrades taking on new responsibilities, the point remains that the IC/CC must assume fundamental responsibility for the present state of turmoil in this organization - responsibility which results from an incorrect political line on the role of the IC/CC. The incorrect organizational line resulted from an incorrect political line by the body.

In the remainder of this paper I will try to raise some of what this comrade believes are the basic reasons for the contradictions that exist in the organization today, and throughout the communist movement. These are raised in the spirit of discussion for the CC, rather than criticisms.

(1) CONFUSION ABOUT THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN "IDEOLOGICAL STRUGGLE" AND "THEORETICAL STRUGGLE."

These two terms have generally been used inter-changeably in the struggle, as well as by most Marxists-Leninists, with very divisive results.

In taking up the two line struggle, the theoretical basis of right and "left" errors is the breach between the objective and subjective factors. The ideological basis for these errors is the class outlook, the ideology of the Bourgeoisie or the ideology of the petty bourgeoisie. They are not the same.

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Self Crit.* The basic source of disunity within the BWC and the communist movement is a result of confusion theoretically, not the lack of "ideological struggle." What has happened is that ideological struggle has been raised to a principal, undermining the basis of unity amongst Marxists-Leninists. To understand this, we must distinguish between two different types of contradictions, which require different methods of resolution. First, the contradiction between MLM and revisionism/trotskyism/anarcho syndicalism/social democracy. And second, the contradictions amongst Marxists-Leninists. The first contradiction is antagonistic, the second is non antagonistic. *on
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In the first case, struggle is absolute and unity is relative. In this regard it is absolutely correct to wage mass ideological struggles against revisionism, etc. Against such organizations as the CPUSA, International Socialists, etc, ideological struggle is key. Such organizations, which represent consolidated trends hostile to Marxism, are not considered part of the communist movement. We wage mass ideological struggles against them in order to heighten the vigilance of the masses, expose such opportunists, and win the approval of the masses.

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class* In the second type of contradiction, amongst Marxists-Leninists, unity is absolute and struggle must be seen as relative. This must be seen as a non antagonistic contradiction, and handled accordingly, through patient persuasion, on the basis of both unity and compromise. In this regard, theoretical struggle is key. Theoretical struggle means utilizing the stand, viewpoint and method of MLM to criticize all forms of opportunism and the ideologies of all dying and decadent classes; to make a serious study of the history and present situation in this country; and to correctly interpret in theory the practical problems arising from the day to day struggle for revolution.

The reason that unity is absolute is because Marxists-Leninists must unite against the common enemy of all people, the monopoly capitalists, in order to form a party that can lead the struggle of the proletariat to victory. There can be no qualitative advancement of the struggle of the working class until all Marxists-Leninists are united into a single, genuine communist party of a new type. What unites Marxists-Leninists is more important at this point than what divides us.

This is not at all to suggest that struggle amongst Marxist-Leninists should be belittled or held back, but we must struggle in order to unite. Amongst Marxist-Leninists, we carry on theoretical struggle on how the ideology of the proletariat, MLM Thought, is to be applied to the concrete conditions of this country.

? What we differ on is not which ideology to uphold, but rather the objective laws of motion of society, from which we derive our strategy and tactics. This is the focus of struggle, while at the same time we unite to defeat our common enemies. The material basis for unity is greater than the subjective basis for disunity.

To raise the slogan that ideological struggle is primary (or to confuse this with theoretical struggle) is to undermine the material basis of unity which does exist, to split Marxists-Leninists, and to confuse an antagonistic contradiction with a non antagonistic contradiction.

Ideological struggle has been the basis of previous two line struggle within the BWC, and the result has been that comrades with the "wrong ideology" have been removed or thrown out. Struggle have been waged to split, not to unite. Under the banner of ideological struggle comrades have conducted antagonistic, factional feuds, each seeking hegemony, as well as hegemony within the communist movement, each setting out to create their own little fiefdom, their own mountain stronghold. In this situation unity is based on friendship, not political line. The line of ideological struggle is the line of hegemony, the line of conspiracy and back room meetings. It is the line which has lead the BWC today into disarray.

Under the banner of ideological struggle organizational discipline has been abandoned. Ideological struggle without organizational discipline become an endless round robin of disputes without resolution, because there can be no compromise on the question of ideology.

At the same time, questions of ideology are not abandoned amongst Marxists Leninists, nor is it the case that on occasion, a split may be absolutely unavoidable. But ideological questions must be settled over a long period of time, in a patient manner. While we can identify the source of either Right or "left" deviations ideologically, the resolution of these deviations is basically a theoretical and political task.

(2) ON THE SLOGAN "POLITICAL LINE IS KEY"

Within the communist movement, and the BWC, the slogan "political line is key" has been taken to mean that unity is built upon agreement with some theoretical formulation in a document or pamphlet, and that once we were agreed on the "line," we were united. This understands the nature of political line in a one sided, non dialectical manner, one which separates theory from practice.

Political line must be understood as BOTH the theoretical formulation we have on particular questions as well as the sum total of tasks the organization sets itself in order to advance tactically and strategically.

Uniting on the basis of political line is not simply agreeing to some document or programmatic statement, it is also agreement on the tasks which are decisive at that point. Unity around political line is something that is built through struggle, through the struggle to apply theoretical formulations to the material problems of making revolution every day, which in turn strengthens our theory. Unity around political line is not simply abstract agreement to a piece of paper, but is built, more than anything else, through practice.

Political line, then, represents the concentrated expression of the interests and demands of a particular class AND a guide to the tasks required to achieve those interests and demands.

Throughout the communist movement, unity around line is seen as agreeing through polemics on certain positions. Within the BWC we are suppose to unite right or "left" deviations as the main danger without any agreement over our tasks in this period. In fact the struggle has been conducted in such a way as to neglect other tasks. This betrays the essence of political line.

It has been precisely a dogmatic approach even to tasks

Here, again, we have taken the slogan that "political line is key" from our Chinese comrades and applied it here dogmatically, in an idealist fashion, separating theory from practice

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(3) "BROAD DEMOCRACY"

There has been considerable confusion in this period of the question of democratic centralism. The formulation of the IC that "in this period there must be broad democracy in order to strengthen centralism.." (Document of Dec 20, 1974, from IC), had bred confusion and disunity within the organization.

This formulation is metaphysical the way it is used. Organizational line must flow from political line, not independent of it. The exact relationship between democracy and centralism at any given time in a communist organization must be determined by the political line at that moment. For comrades from the IC to put forward in this District that "there is no line," then to formulate "broad democracy," is to approach the question of organizational discipline in a metaphysical manner.

The result has been that "broad democracy" has not strengthened centralism, but weakened centralism.

To put "broad democracy" into effect without centralism is to surrender the organization to every opportunist trend and tendency, to open up the organization to a period of "freedom of criticism," without aim or end in sight. Proletarian democracy requires discipline, and discipline, as Lenin defined it, is "unity of action, freedom of discussion and criticism." What was missing in this organization was unity of action.

Furthermore, we should distinguish between the "broad democracy" promoted by the IC and proletarian mass democracy. Mass democracy means that we rely upon the cadre to determine right from wrong. This can only be done when there is a unity of action in the organization, when leadership sums up the experience of cadre, concentrates it, and passes it back to cadre. "Broad democracy" is a bourgeois concept which encourages freedom of criticism for its own sake, democracy for the sake of democracy. Cadre initiative, in the absence of centralized leadership, breeds narrowness, mountain stronghold mentalities, and opportunism. For cadre to really determine the outcome and direction of the struggle, there must be a centralized body.

The way in which "broad democracy" was implemented represented a one sided reaction by leadership to the previous period of bureaucratic centralism. Objectively, however, they both unite, and the result is both incorrect methods of leadership and the disarming of cadre.

This comrade realizes that this is hardly a complete discussion of this question, but that will have to be developed more at a later point. The thrust of what is being said is that the promotion of "broad democracy" contributed to the contradictions revealed by the struggle.

(4) CHARACTERIZATION OF THIS PERIOD AS A "PRE PARTY PERIOD"

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Comrades, increasingly this comrade comes to believe that the way in which we have characterized the period in the communist movement as a pre party period is dogmatic. No other ML movement who broke away from the old revisionist CP and formed a genuine ML party has characterized themselves in a pre party period, as least from what I have seen so far. What I want to present here is the kernel of some ideas that are being developed.

{ We have proceeded dogmatically to apply the situation Lenin described in Russia to the situation here, using WITBD as a bible. While there definately are universal truths from the Bolshavik revolution we cannot avoid, we have as well failed to pay attention to the particularity of the present situation in the US.

The Bolsheviks set out to establish a party of the proletariat. Up to that time in Russia there was no party of the proletariat. They had to defeat various alien ideological trends, but it was not the case that they had to distinguish themselves from an already existing, long standing party which claimed to be the party of the proletariat. That is why they were in a pre party period.

Our situation today is that there does exist a large, well heeled party within the proletariat which claims to be the party of the working class. For us to put forward that we are in a pre party period suggests that there is no party which already exists within the working class. It implies, as the CLP position holds, that the CPUSA was never a genuine party of the proletariat.

However, there is very little scientific study to substantiate that.

Moreover, many honest Marxists-Leninists, such as the Central Organization of US Marxists-Leninists, and others, hold that the CPUSA was, at one time, a genuine party of the proletariat. The difference is very significant. For if the CP was never a genuine party, it would be correct to characterize the period as a "pre party period." However, if we hold that the CPUSA was at one time a genuine party, but is not now, then our task must be characterized by the struggle to demarcate ourselves from the party which presently exists in the proletariat, ideologically, politically and organizationally.

This is a task which we have barely begun to do, or has the rest of the communist movement ((see outline on The History of The Subjective Factor in the US)).

The implications of this distinction are many. To begin with, our theoretical work must focus not on WITBD, but on the history and development of the subjective factor in this country, particularly the CPUSA. It probably is not an exaggeration to state that most communists know more about the democratic party, or the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union, or China, than they do about the CPUSA. How is it possible to hold that the principal contradiction in the communist movement is that between MLM Thought and revisionism and fail to take up a systematic study of revisionism within our own movement? This is the situation today.

Our approach to party building has been mostly a historical and non materialistic. Within the communist movement, there has been almost no discussion of the different turns and periods in the subjective factor even since 1963, with the split between the PRC and the USSR. We have virtually ignored the experience of other ML parties which had the similar task of breaking with the old revisionist party in their country. Forums on party building held still focus almost entirely on the objective factors, not the subjective factor.

These questions raise others. For instance, how can we talk about "winning the vanguard of the proletariat to communism," when we have hardly demarcated ourselves from revisionism? Without such a demarcation, how is it possible to scientifically formulate the strategic tasks for our movement, or apply the 1929 CI position on the national question in the US?

And lastly, this raises the lesson yet to be learned that revolution in the US, while conforming to certain universal laws, will depend upon the particular situation here in this country, upon the particular history of the subjective factors in this country, and its relationship to the objective movement of the proletariat. It is important to note that Mao started out basically by making an analysis of classes in Chinese society and by investigating the peasant question in Hunan Province. There is much to be learned from this approach.

(5) ON THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF CRITICISM AND CRITICISM BY THE IC/CC

Comrades, the CC must take bold steps to regain the confidence of the cadre. The manner in which the current struggle has been unfolded by the IC/CC and old Secretariat has created many problems, and these need to be rectified. The CC at the current meeting should take up a self criticism of its work in the recent period. This means finding the main contradiction, analyzing its opposing parts, deciding which aspect is dominant, and what the implications have been.

There has been too much of an atmosphere of holding back from the cadre of the organization, which has undermined the unity between cadre and leadership. All kinds of rumors and second hand information has been spread about the situation in Detroit, cadre splitting, etc. This must come to an end. Few, if any comrades in this period, have emerged exemplary in carrying out the struggle. This must be realized. We must carry on self criticism and criticism in order to win the approval of the cadre of the organization, in order to strengthen our organization, and weaken our enemies.

(It is only by solving the contradictions which exist, not by turning away from them, that we will move toward the party.)

Unite around political line. Conduct self criticism, criticism.
Call forth the Congress. Cure the sickness in order to save the patient.

Comrade BW
21 February 1975