

March 4, 1979

Comrades of the WCC,

Below we sum up our basic unities and disunities concerning the "Announcement Of A Multilateral Conference." We offer these comments with a strong desire to achieve unity among the groups so that such a conference as proposed will be successful.

First we should comment on the initiative shown by the WCC in pushing to organize this conference. Through your efforts, more comrades have come to see the need for multi-lateral discussions as a concrete way to move party building forward. Thus, it is important that ourselves and other comrades respond to the announcement in a timely and positive manner.

Second, the need for a conference on party building can not be over-emphasized. Though most of the invited groups have basic party unity in opposition to the revisionist "three worlds theory", and recognize the PLA as the leading party in the international communist movement, our unity on the central task remains at an extremely low level. In fact, in spite of some recent successful joint efforts, many of the invited groups know little of each other's party building lines and practice. Thus, we think that a series of party building conferences is the main way to begin overcoming the fragmented state of the movement. We should add here that we agree with the criteria for attendance as put forward in the announcement.

Our disagreements center on the purpose and focus of the conference. We think that the views expressed in the announcement reflect some idealism and wishful thinking, and do not take enough into consideration the material reality of our movement, which, for our purposes, is reflected in the collective objective state of the different groups invited.

As regards the purpose, we don't think that we can expect to unite on a common party building plan to be put into practice in our very first meeting. The type of plan you comrades are calling for--unity on "party building as the central task, the tasks that comprise it and their interrelationships, how we should carry them out"--can only come about after a period of struggle. If we examine the invited groups and their present relationships, we can see that it will take much more than an initial round of struggle and three days of meetings to unite any significant number of forces around a plan to build the U.S. vanguard party. When we look at the groups, we see collectives like ourselves and MLC whose views on party building are undergoing review; Demarcation and Red Dawn whose views must be in opposition; WCC and PC whose views on aspects of party building are openly in opposition, Comrades in the Bay Area who aren't even an organization yet, and others whose views we have no knowledge of. Given this objective state, we can't see how comrades expect unity to come about at the initial meeting, when many comrades will be sitting down with each other for the first time. Thus, we shouldn't set ourselves a purpose that we can not possibly achieve. To arrive at a genuine party building plan that can unite a significant number of Marxist-Leninists will take some protracted struggle, and to divide the movement into definite tendencies and separate plans on the basis of our initial meeting would be prematurely drawing lines of demarcation.

As for the focus, we believe that what is suggested is much too broad. Given the present state of the forces, it is not realistic to expect all of us to have developed enough views on all the suggested questions to be able to achieve unity. Many of the groups, ourselves included, have not yet begun to develop views in some of the areas, and it will not be possible to do this in a matter of four weeks (by April 7). We think some other groups and individuals may encounter similar difficulties. Furthermore, there is absolutely no way unity can develop among 6-7 circles on a particular question if there is only 3-4 hours allotted for discussion. This is especially true with only limited prior struggle.

Finally, we also have some differences with the timetable. As we understand it, WCC, upon receiving responses, will "make some decisions based on this Announcement and the responses..." However, we don't see where the struggle over possible differences around purpose and content will take place. Instead the WCC will examine the responses and make the decisions. We think WCC should synthesize the responses, if possible, and make some

suggestions that reflect the majority opinion. These suggestions should be circulated and final decisions made by all the participating groups. This may take longer, but it is the only way we see that all comrades can unite around a basic purpose and focus.

Here we would like to offer some alternatives concerning the purpose and content. We think that the purpose of the initial meeting should be to unite on some concrete action that will begin to move us toward a joint party building plan. Furthermore, the purpose of an initial meeting should be for all the groups to get acquainted with each other, through discussion of our histories and past lines and practice around party building. We think that this is the most we can hope to achieve in an initial meeting.

Regards the content, we see two main items. One, we should have some discussion of each group's history, and line and practice on party building. We disunite with what M agreed to in Denver that it is not necessary for this to be discussed at the conference. If we are coming together with the idea of eventually uniting on a party plan, we need to take some time and discuss with each other our basic tendencies, deviations, failures, successes, etc. This will give us some historical perspective of each group and help in understanding their present views. Simply circulating our histories in advance is not enough since there is no time allotted in the meeting to raise questions or go into any depth around a group's particular characteristics. If things progress as we hope they will comrades will be seeing a lot more of each other in the future, and it will be to our benefit to find out as much as we can about one another at our initial gathering.

Two, we think that comrades should circulate in advance, and be prepared to discuss what they see as the main immediate task needed to move our movement closer to the party, and what definite concrete steps should be taken to accomplish this task. This would necessarily include some elaboration of the present state of the movement.

After discussion of this, we can then determine what basic unities and disunities we have on how to move forward, and thus focus more specifically on particular aspects of party building to be worked on and taken up in the next multi-lateral meeting. Thus, through a series of meetings on the party, unities can be strengthened, tendencies defined and ultimately lines of demarcation will begin to be drawn. We think that this way, a party building plan will be forged through some extensive struggle, and the unities achieved will be more lasting.

In closing, we would re-emphasize that unity on a party plan can only come about with some persistent struggle. Comrades should get a better grasp of the real existing objective conditions of the groups invited. If not, we will set our sights too high, too soon, and this can only result in failure.

In the spirit of moving party building forward,

KCRWC

by ~~KCRWC~~ KCRWC + WCC

Demarcation

March 10, 1979

Comrades,

Recently you indicated a desire to hold a party building forum in our area with the U.S. Leninist Core. We would like to take this opportunity to explain our basic view of this group.

Previously, KCRWC had comradely relations with this group, as KCRWC did with others in the "Revolutionary Wing". At that time, we had not thoroughly summed up the line and practice of any of the groups, but saw them as having views more closely associated with ours than other groups in the movement. The breakup of the "Wing" made us more keenly aware of the differences existing among the groups, as well as our lack of understanding of much of their line and practice. At that time, we decided to investigate further the views of all the groups to determine which, if any, we had basic unity with.

At this time, we want to emphasize that an analysis of the line struggle within the "Wing" and among the forces emerging after the breakup of the "Wing" is important and essential to a scientific understanding of our movement's history. We have certain views in this regard, although this needs to be deepened. However, the line struggle is not the subject of this letter: the form of struggle is, since this is the chief thing that prevents us from engaging in comradely struggle with the "Core." The form of struggle comes to the fore over line at this time, since the struggle in the "Wing", and PRRWO/RWL in particular, has been so unprincipled and of an agent-provocateur-type that without a summation and repudiation of this activity further struggle with the "Core" could not be principled.

In our observations of PRRWO/RWL we saw much unprincipled struggle and objective provocateur-type conduct: unsubstantiated attacks on comrades, unwarranted interrogation-type struggle, physical assaults, frequent charges made against other comrades as being police spies (one such instance in which KCRWC was implied) without evidence, etc. It was no secret that there was much line struggle in the "Wing" and PRRWO/RWL (which needs to be properly summed up by the "Core"). But this line struggle took place through some of the most unprincipled methods of struggle and objective agent-provocateur conduct in our current movement's history. What we have not seen from the "Core" is any Marxist-Leninist summation, explanation, or self-criticism of these activities whatsoever. On the contrary, what we have seen are assertions, phrase-mongering, name-calling, and agent-labelling. We have absolutely no intention of engaging in any struggle for unity with this "Core", bilateral or otherwise, until we see some thorough summation of their past activities. This is essential. We would also criticize your group for promoting the "Core" without them having done any M-L summation of their past to the movement. A part of the struggle to build a single, genuine M-L party of the proletariat is a struggle against unprincipled methods of struggle and conscious and unconscious agent-provocateur type activities. That is why all genuine M-L's should demand a thorough summation from the "Core."

The "Wing" experience (e.g. the unprincipled unity, unprincipled struggle, objective agent-provocateur activity) and the failure to sum this experience up and draw lessons has had a negative influence on the struggle for the party. This essentially negative influence can be transformed into a positive thing only when the ideological, social, and historical roots of this experience are understood at the level of rational knowledge, both in terms of line and form of struggle, and this knowledge applied in the revolutionary practice of party building.

With Comradely Greetings,

KCRWC and WCC

by MLC

WICHITA COMMUNIST CELL
BOX 493
Wichita Kansas, 67201

from MARXIST-LENINIST COLLECTIVE

Comrades,

We received the proposal for a multilateral conference, and will take it up for more detailed analysis and scrutiny in the immediate future.

At this time we can only give an initial and brief response.

We unite, in general, with your proposal. A multilateral conference of the groups named in your proposal is due. As far as we can say now, we plan to attend and participate in the MULC, because it is basically in accordance with our line, in particular with the suggestion that we put forward in our November letter. Obviously, you've filled in a lot of details that makes your plan more viable and gives us a much better basis from which to struggle.

Our internal rectification campaign has taken an enormous amount of time and work over the past month-6weeks. We don't want to have our rectification campaign encompass all our time and energy, to the exclusion of taking up other tasks, such as criticizing and commenting on your plan in more detail. But the fact is that we are quite busy, thus we will necessarily have to delay a fuller response to your proposal.

We will address the following points of your proposal:

- (1) purpose of the MULC
- (2) principles of unity
- (3) other groups and individuals involved
- (4) Focus of Struggle for the MULC

We will also try to address questions like time, place, security arrangements, etc., although we feel they are secondary questions and should not take up a whole lot of time and effort right now.

While our basic orientation is to participate in the MULC, we feel it is imperative that we have basic, principled unity with the proposal. As we analyze the proposal more deeply, we will register any differences that we have with or problems that we see in it. Then, based on the struggle over any possible contradictions and whether any differences are of principle or tactics, we will determine finally whether to participate. We don't want to sound negative, or make it seem like we don't plan to or want to participate. Rather, we want to lay out very generally what we feel is the correct basis for our participation in a MULC.

We feel that your initiative in this matter is quite positive and hope that all details can be worked out, and unity reached on your proposal.

A note on the Denver forum: we plan to send you our minutes from the forum itself, plus an assessment of it quite soon. We are waiting until we finish holding a series of meetings that we've set up with contacts and friendly organizations to discuss the forum and the speeches. We want to include the results of these meetings in our minutes and assessment.

In the struggle

MLC

by PC

Dear Comrades:

We were very pleased to receive your announcement of a multilateral conference on party-building. The proposal is timely and, in general, very well thought out, and we think that its attention to detail and the methods permitting thorough preparation will do much to enhance the value of the conference. We state below only our questions or disagreements concerning the proposals.

Purpose

Throughout the proposal are indications that the W.C.C. thinks it likely that the conference will produce sufficient unity on party-building line, among sufficient forces, to begin the joint implementation of that line immediately. Given the number and complexity of topics, the existing disunity among the forces invited, and the absence of a series of written polemics in advance, we think that immediate unity on a correct line is very unlikely, though we do hope for significant progress in building unity. Later in these comments we suggest an agenda modification to include a topic on continuing the struggle.

Principles of Unity

We do not think that the overall struggle to unite forces capable of implementing a correct party-building line should be limited to those invited to this conference. However, we definitely agree that the forces you name should first get together separately to try to build on our own existing unity.

In general the principles of unity you have developed permit this and, with the exception stated below, we think that they are correct. But we must register our disagreement with your apparent belief that they exclude only "consolidated revisionists and opportunists or those that more or less refuse to draw lines of demarcation."

There is one point of unity that we may be unable to agree with, depending on what you mean by it: "the PLA is the leading Marxist-Leninist party." Certainly we are among those whom you note "already look to the PLA for leadership." (We wrote them to urge them to publish a foreign-language periodical with the scope and topicality of Peking Review, to help provide some of the guidance we think they can give.) But if you mean more than this, e.g., that the party evidences the consistency of Lenin or the authority and capacity to analyze other parties and their tasks of, say, the Executive Committee of the Comintern, we must say that such propositions have not been proven to our satisfaction. In fact, we do not see how they could have been proven to any U.S. communists' satisfaction, unless we are unaware of some really intensive and critical study that has taken place. If comrades are content to place one party qualitatively above all others because of a correct line on questions dividing the international communist movement, because its leaders' writings on other subjects sound correct, and because articles, chiefly produced by the party itself, picture practice that appears exemplary, such comrades would have learned no lessons from the experience of practically all of us in considering the CPC an exemplary party by using the same methods of evaluation.

If this remains a principle of unity, and if our statements are deemed inconsistent with it, we are willing to engage in the pre-conference struggle over it which you offer to undertake, rather than be excluded from the conference, and we could go into particular disagreements with and questions about the line of the PLA. But it would be far preferable to rewrite the

p.o.u. statement so that it is acceptable to forces who cannot agree with it now. Most of the circles invited to the conference are incapable of simultaneously writing up all their positions on "Focus of Struggle" and "Documentation of Existing Views," evaluating others' positions prior to the conference, and conducting serious study and struggle over whether the PLA's contributions on all fronts make it the party that leads all others.

For our own part, we could not in good conscience begin the tremendous work of preparing to attend the conference before it is clear that we will be permitted to attend.

Though we are sure that the point was included as part of a serious attempt to define a certain tendency within the communist movement, neither of the reasons given for its inclusion logically supports your decision:

The point on the PLA was made because defending the dictatorship of the proletariat and socialist Albania is one of our fundamental proletarian internationalist responsibilities, and most of the circles who will initially receive this Announcement already look to the PLA for leadership.

Comrades, it is entirely possible to defend the proletarian dictatorship and the PSRA without accepting the conclusion that the PLA is the leading party. (If there are several socialist countries in the world at any given time, do communists refuse to defend those led by parties that fail to be as strong and correct as "the leading party"?) And the fact that most circles to be invited can accept any given point is certainly not an automatic reason to exclude those who cannot.

Content of the Conference

1. Circles' and individuals' history: should provide general background on composition of groups, their experience, and the political tendencies they have been a part of. But specificity on names of prior organizations, locations, and dates should be avoided for security reasons.

2. Party-building: add a point on preconditions for party-formation (e.g., a certain level of fusion? a certain size? uniting most M-Ls? how much internal unity?).

3. Page 6, points 3 & 4: add: Are there stages in which we must first unite some communists, consolidate those forces, then struggle to win over others? Who should be united in the beginning stage of implementing a joint party-building plan?

4. Same points: add an explicit question on what is the correct form of pre-party organization for M-Ls in our conditions (e.g., local circles, with bilateral contacts, some kind of network, an Iskra-type network, a democratic-centralist organization?).

5. Page 6, point 5: omit questions like those concerning the internal functioning of the party, or transfer to "Documentation of Existing Views." In our opinion, one of the preconditions for party-formation is unity on how the party should function, unity achieved after thorough study and struggle carried out as part of the party-building process. It is neither necessary nor possible to settle all such questions in the context of this conference, any more than we should now try to settle questions concerning the content of the party's work (like the national question).

6. Main danger:

a) De-emphasize this as a separate point in each group's pre-

sentation. Instead encourage groups to discuss main and secondary deviations along with their discussions of the correct line on each point discussed under "Focus of Struggle" and "Documentation of Views." E.g., when stating tasks regarding winning advanced workers, identify typical deviations in other lines on these tasks. Then use the "main danger" topic to gather these points together in a coherent analysis.

b) Add a question on the main danger among our own forces: what are the historic deviations of participants at this conference?

c) Add a strong recommendation that comrades study more readings on ultra-leftism. (We can forward a reading list.)

On this last point, if conference participants try to struggle over the main danger without the preparation we recommend, many of us will be speaking entirely different languages. A very serious degree of confusion on how to distinguish "left" from right errors dominates large sections of the communist movement. We have shared this confusion and think that many others invited to the conference still do.

Consider the following descriptions of those who follow a certain type of deviation, all taken from "the classics" or PLA articles: "They negate the necessity of theory, scientific consciousness; . . . they oppose the necessity of working out clear political programmes, scientific strategy and tactics. According to them the important thing is to start and carry out the revolution."¹ Sometimes they seek to accept all, regardless of outlook, into their "party of action."² They may struggle for loose revolutionary organizations rather than disciplined ones.³ They accept "the notorious Credo programme: Let the workers wage their 'economic struggle against the employers and the government'. . . , and let the intellectuals conduct the political struggle. . . ,"⁴ i.e., they can be classic Economists.⁵ "They rise against the necessity of introducing socialist consciousness into the working class and the labouring masses; they say. . . that consciousness and organization are spontaneously acquired in the process of the struggle."⁶ Thus they believe, "Our task is not to teach the people but to rouse them."⁷ During World War I they engaged in a "shamefully smug reiteration of the slogans of chauvinism. . . ."⁸

Comrades, most of these errors can be made by right opportunists, but every source cited in the preceding paragraph was describing ultra-lefts.

The great majority of comrades reading these words will be absolutely unable to believe us until they check the sources themselves; then they will have to believe us. This is why we say that there is a great deal of confusion on this question and insist that, if the "main danger" question is to remain on the agenda at all, it must be preceded by some study of the forms ultra-leftism can take.

7. In the topics for position papers, add a point corresponding to the agenda item on party-building plans. Some specifics will depend on the degree of unity that emerges during the conference, but basic orientations can be stated in advance.

8. Expand the agenda time devoted to party-building plans (at the expense of bilateral meetings or by shortening time for other topics). With four hours for sumup of areas of unity and disagreement, criticism/self-criticism, and party-building plans, we think the latter is given too little time. This is connected to our criticism of the proposal's unrealistic assessment of how much unity can be achieved at this conference. We think it unlikely that many groups will be able to rapidly unite on a single plan.

That unity, when it comes, will come sooner if we have more time to struggle for ~~it~~ in while we can do so face to face. Furthermore, our own proposals for the road forward will aim at opening the struggle over party-building line to other circles in the movement, since we consider it very unlikely that the list of conference participants includes all who a) can unite on a correct party-building line and b) have a sufficient grasp of M-L and a good class stand so as to be able to contribute to the party-building effort as well as conference participants can.

Therefore we see a major focus of attention at the end of the conference being how to both continue the struggle over party-building line among ourselves and how to publicize that struggle and engage others in it. The present agenda probably allows for less than two hours' time on this and on all other aspects of comrades' positions on a party-building plan, and we think that that is insufficient.

9. Is there any way to squeeze in time to discuss how our forces can cooperate in struggling against the Theory of Three Worlds? At this point we have no concrete proposals (either on forming an anti-TTW coalition or on fitting this into the agenda), but we are raising the question for others' consideration. (Our raising this is tied to our lack of confidence that a party-building organization will be formed rapidly as a result of this conference, and our belief that any steps that could make the anti-TTW struggle more effective should not await the formation of such an organization.)

Logistics and Timetable

We agree on all points put forward. One addition: security ground rules should be circulated in advance. We strongly favor assignment of, and strict adherence to, code names. This practice defeats an important goal of both police surveillance of the conference, and also of police interrogation of any of us in later years.

The timetable will be difficult to adhere to, and our experience in requesting prompt replies to our proposal for responding to the MLOC makes us think that some comrades will be lagging. Since the cross-country mails are also very slow (5 days or more), and since the timetable is key for successful conference preparation, we urge you to be non-liberal about immediately and firmly inquiring when a deadline appears to have been missed.

We hope that these comments are helpful. While we consider several of the points quite important, only the question of what position we must accept on the PLA could prevent our participation. We are looking forward to the conference and wish to repeat our positive criticism for your initiative and thoroughness in presenting this proposal.

With communist greetings,
Pacific Collective (M-L)

NOTES

1. Foto Cami, "Objective and Subjective Factors in the Revolution," Albania Today, 1-2/73, second para. under "Revolutionary Movement and the Party."
2. LCW 6: 273.
3. LCW 13: 167-68; 5: 328, 46C-67, 493.
4. LCW 5: 412.
5. LCW 9: 111; 23: 13 & n. 4.
6. Cami, para. 6 under "Marx & the Historic Merit of Lenin."
7. Marx, Engels, Lenin, Anarchism & Anarcho-Syndicalism, p. 113.
8. LCW 21: 32; 30: 420.

3/7/79

Dear comrades of the WCC,

We apologize again for responding late. We only received your letter on March 2. Now we would like to expand on our initial answer.

We are looking forward to this conference. We have had little or no contact with most of the groups invited, although we have always tried to correspond with whomever we could. We don't know about comrades' line or practice, but the conference and preliminary work are a chance to discuss these things. Thanks to right opportunist domination of the U.S. communist movement, the Leninist trend is scattered and disunited. This conference gives us a chance to pick up some of the pieces, and achieve a higher level of unity with comrades from all over the country. It has to be good for people with some unity on such an important question as the international situation to meet together. We do not think that one, or even two, plans for party-building will be able to come from this conference. But the possibility of regular and systematic exchanges and polemics, and the opportunity of moving in the direction of joint work on party-building should not be missed.

The principles of unity that you suggest should not pose any difficulties that can not be overcome, but we do want to make some comments. Why do we say: "there is no genuine party or center"? If it is because MLOC and the rest are economist, then we should say so. Our lines of demarcation should be ideological, and not drawn with an eye to eliminating certain groups. We certainly do not think any purpose could be served by admitting COUSML or MLOC, but their exclusion should be based on grounds of ideological and political principle.

In regard to the Party of Labor of Albania, we certainly agree that they have played the leading role in exposing the counter-revolutionary "theory of three worlds", in defending and reiterating Leninist norms of party organization, and in opposing the present revisionist leadership of the Communist Party of China. We are still studying other positions of the PLA and we do not know whether the above points of unity with them are sufficient grounds to consider them a "leading party". If by a leading party we mean the above three points, let's say that. We are critically examining the PLA's

position on Mao Zedong's contributions to Marxism-Leninism. And the historical experience of the CPUSA shows the danger of drawing lines of demarcation on the basis of parties or personalities without spelling out the political and ideological lines that they represent.

On your third point, about communist methods of resolving contradictions, we would just like to say that besides ideological and political struggle, besides criticism and self-criticism, practice is a decisive criterion for the truth of ideological and political line.

We would like to include a word of caution. We have seen general principles of unity before - good ones too. They are not a sufficient basis for really getting together because they have to be backed up by practice that supports the words. One meeting cannot show whether this is the case or not for all the groups attending. We oppose any idea that an organization or leading center will emerge from this conference. We suggest that people be clear about what they do expect because that will give a focus. But if people insist that a party building plan will emerge from a conference of unfamiliar groups, with short-term preparation, and a wide-ranging agenda, this implies either amateurish naivete or another opportunist maneuver on the part of some people who already have a plan, like some of the maneuvers we have all seen before. We are not opposed to party-building plans; we have one (see "Why the Red Dawn?" in Red Dawn #1.) But we think that people should be very open about what their plans are.

We are glad that the preparations for the conference include corresponding with everyone on a wide range of subjects first. Why, then, have an agenda that repeats much of this? We think that oral presentations from each group on the subjects covered in writing will be tedious and unnecessary. We suggest that you wait until the documents start coming in and the principle areas of unity and difference emerge before setting an agenda. Then representatives of the main viewpoints could be selected to initiate discussion before opening debate to all, instead of insisting that every group say their piece first.

We would like to call the attention of everyone concerned to our views on Demarcation, which split from us. Our views on these people are not the fruit of some sectarian squabbling. We were very patient in struggling against the opportunism of the one person in particular, and we see him as an opportunist. At this point we will certainly

not say that we will not participate if they do, but we urge comrades to check out our article on "Split in the Red Dawn", in Red Dawn #2, and the line and practice of these people. We look forward to discussing this with comrades as we get to know them, and we are prepared to provide comrades with documentation on the positions and practice of these people.

Finally, we would like to refer you to our publications, which contain many of our views on party building and the U.S. communist movement. As we write on the subjects suggested for the conference, we will often refer people to one or another section of our previous articles. We are also presently elaborating our views on the international situation, which we hope to complete before the conference, and we plan to commit our views on and polemics with MLOC to print in the future.

Looking forward to continuing the struggle for the party,

Yours,

Red Dawn Committee (M-L)

Copies sent to: CC, XCRWC, MLC, PC, RWC, RWP, WROC, Sunrise Collective, and Demarcation.

By RWC

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Oakland, CA 94614

March 5, 1979

Wichita Communist Cell
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Comrades:

We have studied and discussed the Announcement of a Multilateral Conference on Party Building. We are in basic unity with the idea of the conference and applaud WCC for taking the initiative in calling the MULC. There are two particular issues we feel must be discussed. The resolution of the first may determine whether we can attend the MULC.

1. We are seriously concerned with the requirement that we unite on the view that "the PLA is the leading Marxist-Leninist Party." We note that you explain this principle of unity with the statement, "Agreement with this point should not be taken to mean unity with all the lines and practices of the PLA." Our question to you and other organizations invited to participate in the MULC is what do you mean by "leading party?" By what criteria do we determine the leading party? What does it mean to be the leading party?

Our view on the PLA is that it has provided leadership in many important areas. The PLA views on the trade union question are very influential in our trade union line. The materials published by the PLA on the woman question are important. We studied the History of the PLA while developing our line on party building and found it extremely useful. And, of course, the PLA has on the whole provided leadership in the struggle against the Theory of the Three Worlds.

On the other hand, we are in disagreement with the PLA in some very important areas. We think that it is a serious error for the PLA to have recognized the Workers and Peasants Communist Party of Iran as the vanguard party of Iran. We think that the PLA is clearly incorrect in its views of Mao Tsetung and that if it continues on that course it will wind up in the swamp of "left" opportunism. We also think that the PLA's line on two line struggle in the party is metaphysical and idealist. A party, like any other living thing, only develops in the course of the struggle of opposites. To say that two line struggle shouldn't or doesn't occur in the party is to guarantee the death of the party.

The view held by other comrades on the PLA are of the utmost importance regarding our attendance at the MULC. If the PoU regarding the PLA requires substantially higher unity than we have developed, then either the PoU will have to

change or we will be unable to attend the MULC.

2. Our other concern with the MULC as presently envisioned is the proposed agenda. As far as we are concerned the agenda will lead to abstract discussion with little ability to reach concrete unity around concrete principles. For example, we could spend hours or more discussing party building as the central task, party building tasks and key link--theory and programme without ever touching earth. Just about every one of the topics of the agenda is susceptible to that kind of problem. We do not believe that those subjects should not be discussed, but we do believe that for a meaningful struggle, those subjects must be discussed in the context of the real world and our analysis of that world.

We therefore propose that the agenda be substantially amended. We do not have a final or complete proposal at this time, but we would suggest the following. We start from the analysis of concrete conditions, so we would suggest that there be a plenary to discuss the objective situation in the world today: what are the relative strengths and weaknesses of the superpowers, what are the relative strengths and weaknesses of the other imperialists both in relation to one another and in relation to the superpowers, where is revolution on the rise, what is the threat of war, what are the principle contradictions in the world, how is the crisis of imperialism evidenced?

We would suggest a second plenary on the objective situation in the United States: what forces are in motion, what is our analysis of classes, what is the state of the national movements, what is the situation for women, what are the forces of reaction up to?

We would suggest a third plenary on the state of the movement: recent history of the movement, what lines are represented by forces not involved in the MULC, strengths and weaknesses of the movement, etc.

After those discussions are completed and some unity is reached, it is appropriate to turn to the question of how do we move forward, what is our party building plan? In the struggle around this last topic we would discuss such questions as party building as the central task, key link, theory and programme, fusion, what it is and how to develop it, uniting M-Ls, etc.

There is one glaring omission from the agenda. Nowhere is it suggested that we should struggle over the question of what is a party and how does it function, what is the internal life of the party? We feel that the trend in the movement is to overplay the aspect of centralism and squash democracy in the party. As we said, two line struggle is the lifeblood of the party, democracy must flourish. We do not believe that there should be factions within the party. Nor do we believe that once a decision is made in the party that cadre are free

Page Three

to carry it out according to their whims or beliefs. That would be a major breakdown of discipline and cripple the party. However, none of that means that struggle should not be wide open and for all cadre to participate in fully and without fear of reprisal. These are questions which must be taken up by any forces attempting to build a communist party, questions which must be discussed at the MULC.

We hope that comrades in organizations invited to attend the MULC give our suggestions and questions careful attention. We look forward to all responses. And we hope to see you over Memorial Day weekend.

Comradely greetings,

Revolutionary Workers Collective (RWC)

by Some Comrades

March 2, 1979

Wichita Communist Cell
Wichita, Kansas

Dear comrades,

We were pleased to receive a copy of your proposal for a conference ("Announcement of a Multilateral Conference on Party-Building") within two weeks of the Denver discussion. Unfortunately, after studying your proposal in depth, we find we disagree with both the purpose ("based on principled unity, an agreed upon party-building plan (or plans) would be put into practice") and the content (discussion limited to "party-building line", no discussion of the international situation, little or no discussion of groups' existing views on other major questions).

Before laying out our criticisms in detail, we want to make two general points. (1) In our view, you misrepresent the depth and content of agreement reached at the Denver discussion on the proposed conference. (2) Our two differing views of a conference stem from two opposing conceptions of how the party is going to be built.

What Happened at Denver

In the Announcement, you say:

"At the Denver Forum, several circles met and discussed specific plans for a multilateral meeting or conference. General agreement was reached, although not necessarily on all the particularities . . ." (p. 1)

"At the Denver Forum, there was good struggle among several circles and forces (KCRWC, MLC, RWP, Some Comrades, WCC) around the multilateral meeting. The discussion centered around two complementary documents: 'WCC' Basic Proposal to Organize a Multilateral Meeting on Party Building'; 'Notes on a Conference of Marxist-Leninists' by Some Comrades in the Bay Area. What emerged was a synthesis of these two documents, although there was not consensus on every point . . ." (p. 2) (emphasis ours)

Do these statements accurately represent what happened in Denver? Reports to us by both our comrade and another indicate not.

First, your "Basic Proposal", which was to have provided the major focus for discussion of the conference at Denver, was extremely vague and brief with only a few sentences addressing the purpose and content of the proposed conference:

"The objectives of a multilateral meeting would be to further clarify and unite, as many circles as possible, around the advanced party building line, particularly how to concretely move forward the key link. This unity would then be implemented in practice. In order for a multilateral meeting to be successful, many circles would have to be convinced that a multilateral, face-to-face struggle, is an important way to further clarify the different party building lines and practice and strive for principled unity. Further, party building proposals would need to be circulated at least one month in advance to allow the attending circles to discuss the various proposals properly and circulate the responses two weeks prior to the multilateral meeting. The

International Situation, because it is vitaly connected with party building, should be discussed during the multilateral meeting." (p. 1)

Our "Notes on a Conference of Marxist-Leninists", while more specific than your "Basic Proposal", was not a definite "specific plan", nor was it intended to be. It was written as a contribution to the discussion. It is incorrect then to say that "specific plans" were discussed at Denver.

You recognized this at Denver when you were self-critical for your proposal being so sketchy, and we think the self-criticism was correct because the sketchiness reflected a lack of sufficient preparation for this phase of the Denver meeting, a phase you had volunteered to take the initiative in. But now in your Announcement you misrepresent what took place on this point. The "general agreement" that was reached was really very general.

Second, while your Announcement represents a kind of "synthesis" of the two documents discussed at Denver, it is primarily your own specific development of the "general agreement" reached at Denver, and one we don't agree with. For example, it was not agreed at Denver that the purpose of the conference would be to develop and adopt a party building plan (or plans, as you say) at the conference. We think this would be jumping ahead of the actual conditions that exist, particularly the vagueness about the views which groups who would be attending hold on vital questions. That is why we said in our "Notes" that the purpose should be:

"To find out what the basic views of each group are, in order to see if there is one tendency or more among the groups. To begin to move toward a joint party-building plan." (p. 1)

To begin to move toward a joint party-building plan is not the same as:

"based on principled unity, an agreed upon party building plan (or plans) would be put into practice . . . such close unity may not be possible to achieve, and more than one party building plan may emerge. Still, we believe that all comrades should strive to unite on a principled basis around a common party building plan, in order to carry it out in practice." (p. 2)

Despite your disclaimer, the dominant idea you are putting out is that we should strive to unite around a common party-building plan and it is possible to do so at the conference, so much so that this must be part of its purpose. As we said, we think this jumps ahead of present conditions.

This difference over the purpose of the conference is reflected in differences over the content. The differences center around the main ideas contained in what you term the "Focus of Struggle" and "Documentation of Existing Views". That is, questions of "party-building line" as opposed (in your presentation) to major political line questions like the nature of the current crisis in US and world imperialism, the analysis of classes and strategy for revolution in the U.S., the nature of the struggles of the Black and Chicano peoples. (Why you call the latter "Documentation of Existing Views" is unclear, since some of the views on "party-building line" clearly exist too. You word the distinction that way because, it seems, you think "party-building line" is one thing and views on the major line questions are another. This is just the conception we disagree with.)

As to what was agreed on at Denver, we understand it was agreed that the conference would focus on questions of party building. It was further agreed that views on the vital questions laid out in our "Notes" in section IID would be addressed by the groups prior to the conference through a written circulation of views.

On the first point, what you present as the "Focus of Struggle": It wasn't agreed that the discussion of party building would take the specific form the Announcement suggests. It wasn't agreed the discussion would be based on the view that "party-building line is key", but this is what the Announcement in fact does. It wasn't agreed that the discussion would be based on classical works on the party-building experiences of other countries completely separated from the essential task of drawing lines of demarcation here and now. But the Announcement does this too.

You have every right to put such a proposal forward, but we are not compelled to agree with it, nor should it be presented as if it represented a consensus arrived at in Denver, since that was not the case. We are not opposed to discussing party building as the central task--in fact we think it is essential to do it--but we think the discussion must be based on a concrete idea of where comrades now stand on vital questions which are (or are becoming) lines of demarcation.

In this respect, at the Denver meeting, the comrade from our circle has told us, it took a great deal of struggle on his part to win the forces there (WCC, KCRWC, MLC, a Denver comrade) to any kind of exploration, prior to the conference or at it, of areas which are or are becoming lines of demarcation. The agreement reached was that there would be an exchange of written views on these major questions ("Documentation of Existing Views"). The comrade from our circle is self-critical, though, because he didn't introduce (and there wasn't) any discussion about how differences on these questions would be made an integral part of the conference. But it was not agreed that major questions of international line (for example, Hoxha on the CPC) would never be discussed at the conference. Nor were there any revised concrete proposals on the content of the conference presented or formulated at Denver. For all practical purposes, exclusion of discussion on the international situation is what the Announcement envisions when it says:

"The subject material below ("Documentation of Existing Views") will not be the subject of criticism prior to the MULC or the subject of struggle at the plenary sessions of the MULC, except where the material directly fits into The Focus of Struggle." (p. 7)

But that is a critical point: how could there be concrete discussion of the "Focus of Struggle" without clear and definite views on "Existing Views"? That is, how could there be a meaningful discussion of a party-building plan without provision for discussion of where groups stand on the Black liberation struggle, the strategy for revolution in the U.S., or Hoxha and the PLA's apparently wholesale rejection of Mao and the Chinese revolution? How could there be a discussion of "what theoretical work needs to be done" without provision for examination of some of the "Existing Views" in detail? Yet there is no hint about what the burning theoretical issues of the day might be, no guidance in the Announcement on how the question of essential theoretical work is to be dealt with concretely.

Considering your listing of priorities for the conference, if something were to be slighted or not completed, prior to the conference, it would be the above areas, the "Documentation of Existing Views", the heart of any viewpoint on building the party.

Also, we wonder why you changed from considering the international situation to be "vitaly inter-connected with party-building" (see p. 2 above) to seeing a discussion of the international situation as secondary to "party-building line" --to the point that you suggest discussions on the international situation should be postponed until "at least several months" after the conference? To us this is going over from a correct view to a rightist one, one which PUJ, and in this section of the movement, PC, have been adhering to. It is rightist because it calls for moving toward organizational unity (e.g. "building the center") before adequate lines of demarcation have been drawn, in direct violation of Lenin's teachings on the question.

Two Conceptions of Building the Party

As we noted, we believe the WCC proposal ("Announcement") and our "Notes" reflect two different and opposing conceptions of how the party should be built. Struggle around these two conceptions has already been going on, and now it seems to be sharpening.

The first conception, which we see reflected in the WCC proposal, views our tasks in the current period roughly as follows:

The groups now in correspondence are already a tendency, though perhaps not a well-defined one. These groups (and perhaps others) should now develop a common party-building plan which they will jointly implement. (WCC goes so far as to say that "based on principled unity, an agreed upon party building plan (or plans) would be put into practice". But on what basis could WCC support two plans?) This can probably be done at a conference held in late May, based on agreement with the points of unity, circulation of views on vital questions prior to the conference, and focus at the conference on party-building line. The plan itself will involve a way to make solving our theoretical tasks the primary aspect of our work, but of course we will carry out practical work at the same time. This will all be done under the guiding idea of "building the center" (WCC), or studying "party-building theory" (WCC, KCRWC), or uniting around "party-building line" (PC).

It follows that those who hold that "political line is key link" are wrong. Further exposition of and struggle around views on programmatic questions and in particular the international situation should be postponed until a common party-building plan (or plans) can be adopted and implemented.

The second conception, which in general we adhere to, is:

The groups now in correspondence do not yet constitute a tendency, or at most only a very rough one. The groups should proceed by laying out their views and struggling over differences on all the vital questions to see if there is in fact one tendency or more than one. This is an essential part of drawing lines of demarcation (Demarcation, us). This must be done before we can talk of an organizational form like "building the center". It is not a question of "with whom to go, but where to go" (Lenin) because it is not yet known whether groups hold antagonistic views on fundamental questions, including the basic approach and method of Marxism-Leninism. In these conditions it is too soon to talk of adopting a party-building plan at a conference in a couple of months. There is a possibility that a theoretical journal would be the best form of work to further clarify the unities and disunities of the groups after the conference and forge a leading tendency (Demarcation).

The phrase "political line is key link" has been used in several ways in

the "anti-revisionist movement". After reviewing "Let's Move Party Building Forward", we are still not sure what meaning WCC attaches to it. If "political line is key link" means that in the "first stage" we develop ideological unity, "second stage" we develop unity on major political lines, and "third stage" we develop organizational unity--that is, the old conception of ATM--then it is an incorrect view, because unity is not built so neatly in such stages. If "political line is key link" means the "formation of the party is a settled question" (WVO) and we must now develop correct tactical lines on questions of trade union work, anti-discrimination struggles, political repression campaigns, etc., then that too is a wrong view. But if it means that we need to draw lines of demarcation before even discussing organizational unity (Lenin), then it is correct. (WCC should specify what meaning they give to "political line is key link".)

We think the conference proposal should establish a framework for struggle over these two general conceptions of how to proceed with building the party.

(Note: Although we include both Demarcation and ourselves in the second category, this doesn't imply we have unity on major political line questions. In fact, we think sharp differences in some areas may be emerging between Demarcation and ourselves.)

The remainder of this letter will consist of section-by-section comments, criticisms and suggested changes of the Announcement. We are not making an alternate proposal at this time, but rather indicating what we think the changes should be in the current proposal. It would be premature to draw up an alternate proposal since we have seen no responses from other groups to your "Basic Proposal", our "Notes", and your "Announcement", though we've heard some comments.

Purpose: We have indicated our views on the purpose above (p. 2).

Criteria for attendance: We had most agreement with this section of the proposal, but we do have some suggestions for changes.

--Eurocommunism should be added to the list of "main international revisionist trends" since it is as significant as social-democracy or trotskyism, both of which are mentioned.

--on the second point of unity, we suggest dropping the word "simultaneously" and saying: "and practical work must also be carried out". This change is to avoid the interpretation, which we've seen in this section of the movement, that all theoretical work must be carried out in close and direct connection with immediate practical work. This interpretation belittles learning from indirect experience.

--we think the third point of unity should definitely be retained.

--(Announcement, p. 4) the proposal doesn't address possible different levels of participation by groups or individuals. We think this should be worked out prior to the conference. For example, an individual ("lone comrade") who is attending might want to make a presentation on a few but not all of the subjects for discussion.

--(Announcement, p. 4) you state:

"The question of a group of individuals not working toward and assuming some communist organizational form will be taken up in the course of the multilateral conference."

This appears to be directed at our circle, since we are not a "formal" group at this time, though we plan either to form a group or become part of another. We think this is a legitimate subject for discussion at the conference, but we think the presentation of it by WCC is one-sided. What also needs to be discussed is tiny groups of individuals claiming to be a "communist form of organization", by which is usually meant a democratic centralism formation, when they are not large enough to implement democratic centralism in any meaningful sense and when in at least one case they are apparently not even large enough to be democratic (that is, have a majority and a minority). This should be related to the question of perpetuating small circle spirit.

--the proposal needs a more specific procedure for inviting additional groups to the conference. Who determines whether or not a "new" group comes within the points of unity, for example? Shouldn't the "known" groups which agree to participate based on the announcement have a say in the inclusion of additional groups? Groups with more experience in this area than we have should make a more specific proposal.

Content for the Multilateral Conference: We have already indicated our disagreement with the basic approach to the content of the conference presented in the Announcement. We think the material covered under "Focus of Struggle" has a definite place at the conference, but that it should not be the main topic. In particular, we think some of the subjects included under "Documentation of Existing Views" should be on the agenda as well. For example, IIF (p. 7): "On what basis do we say that the PLA is the leading party? Evaluation of the PLA's criticisms of the CPC under Mao, etc." This particular topic is beginning to reveal strong differences on fundamental questions in this section of the movement, and we consider it a must, even though comrades may be able to develop their views only in a rudimentary way if the conference is held in late May (since Hoxha's book is only now being made available in English). (The book, Imperialism and the Revolution, can be ordered from MLOC or COUSM-L.)

But this isn't the only topic we see as essential to discuss at the conference if previous written circulation of views reveals basic differences. Another example would be the nature of Black people's oppression in the U.S. If some groups think there is a Black nation with the right to self-determination and others don't, this needs discussion at such an initial exploratory conference.

Some points on your section titled "Focus of Struggle":

--Section A "Circles and Individual's History": This should be strictly limited in terms of time, perhaps no more than ten minutes per group. This could probably be done through written statements circulated before the conference and discussed briefly at the conference.

--Section B "Fusion": You say: "What is the correct view of fusion? Does it include both party building and winning the broad masses?" This is inaccurate. Do you mean to say at what stage in party building does winning the broad masses become an immediate task? Also, why is the topic "Fusion" put before Section C "Party-Building"? It would be more logical to discuss this at some point after

Section C.

--Section C2 "Party-Building as the Central Task" and C3 "Party-Building Tasks and the key link". Our basic objection to the outline here is that there is nothing at all on drawing lines of demarcation. This is a strange omission since the major readings for this section are from Lenin, who was very clear in those readings on this point. These sections also show the bias of WCC by including your own views specifically ("key link is building the center"), with which, as you know, there is considerable disagreement, while omitting the views of others: the possibility of a joint theoretical journal at this stage (Demarcation, PC); a network in the not too distant future (PC, at least at one time). In other words, this section should have noted the specific proposals and views of different groups on these topics, and not presented everything in rather general terms with the exception of WCC's specific ideas! (But you did omit mention of one of your views about which there is also strong disagreement: "party-building theory". We think it was incorrect not to mention this as a topic for discussion for the conference because it was an area of strong disagreement at Denver. --What is "party-building theory"? Is it a separate body of theory of some sort? What does it include? What are your current views on your proposal of July 78 for a joint national study on party building?)

Method of the Conference: We are open to the general method discussed, as long as the majority of the time is not spent on the "Focus of Struggle", which is what the present section on Method proposes. Specifically, we don't think that all day Sunday (second day) should be spent on the topics outlined under the Tentative Agenda, since this would turn practically the entire conference into a discussion of "party-building line".

Agenda: We agree that three days would be good, and the weekend suggested is fine too, if there is adequate time for preparation. (Our "Notes" suggested an unrealistic 1 1/2-2 months.) We think the inclusion of bilateral meetings is a good idea.

Timetable: Agree, unless disagreements over the structure require setting the date for the conference later. However, we think two weeks is not enough time for circulation of written views.

Summary of our main points on the Announcement

1. We think the purpose should be changed. While struggle toward a party-building plan should be included, the expectation that a plan can be agreed on and adopted at the conference should be dropped.
2. As to content, we are opposed to skirting important theoretical questions in the name of getting down to business. The notion of "party-building theory" gives a "theory is primary" cover to what is basically conceived of as an organizational task. When the theoretical basis for unity has not been laid, to rush to "unity" is unprincipled. Hence, the "Focus of Struggle" should be a part of the conference but should not dominate the allotted time. Hoxha's criticisms of Mao and the CPC should be included as well as some (not all) other issues on which important differences appear during the circulation of written views. There should be adequate time at the conference to struggle over differences on major questions

of political line.

3. Unless comrades agree that some changes need to be made in these two areas we would not see much value in holding the conference and probably would not participate.

We agree with you that preparation for the conference will entail a great deal of work, not the least of which will fall on you as coordinators of the proposal and ideas for the conference. We think it is a good thing that you have taken initiative in trying to get the conference off the ground, although as we have indicated we disagree with much of your proposal as it stands. We are prepared to do our share and take part in preparations for the conference, if, as we said, some changes are made in the proposal.

revolutionary regards,

Comrades in the Bay Area
(B. R. Johnson)

2110 23rd St.
San Francisco, CA 94107

Addendum: to be added on p. 7 after the paragraph on Section C2:

--Section IC3a "What are our party-building tasks and how do we carry them out?" This section should outline the two (or perhaps more) conceptions that seem to be emerging on how to proceed at this point in building the party, so that direct struggle around them can take place. Also in this section, as one of the subsections, we think it would be useful to include discussion of what was wrong with MLOC's plan: the form, the content, or both, as we suggested in our "Notes".

Copies sent to: CC, Demarcation, KCRWC, MLC, PC, Red Dawn, RWC, RWP, and WROC.

by WROC

Feb. 27, 1979

Dear Comrades:

This letter is in response to your announcement of a multilateral conference on party building. Our first reaction on receiving the announcement was that we felt it would be a great step forward but after collectively reading and evaluating the proposal we have found several very serious drawbacks.

1) "The purpose of the MULC is to provide an organized framework so that ideological struggle can take place in a systematic way on how to advance party building, and based on principled unity, an agreed on party building plan (or plans) would be put into practice." We believe that the proposed conference would be successful if it only set forth a path towards party building, a method of carrying out the ideological struggle that is to lay the backbone of a new communist party in the US. The line put forward in this sentence from the 2nd page of your announcement as well as other sections in essence are putting forward the line of organization as the key link. This was stated earlier and more clearly in your response to MLC's June letter when you said: "In building the party we have several tasks: building the center (the key link)...". We differ with this type of priority. Our view of the tasks in front of us in terms of party building are first to begin to draw lines of demarcation clearly so we can see who are in a trend. With this begun and proceeding we can begin to see who the leaders are in drawing these lines of demarcation and in the struggle to delineate a trend. Demarcation put it clearly when they replied to MLC: "This is what we need today- ideological struggle leading to ideological unity so that we can then unite." (p.5) The need to establish a center and to establish a newspaper or other method of carrying out propaganda and struggle ideologically follow closely the process of drawing lines of demarcation and establishing a Marxist-Leninist trend. The MULC while devoting a great deal of time to ideological questions has lined up so great a number of questions with so little time for prior exchange of views between the various groups to in effect negate the ideological aims it is trying to achieve. In effect we see the real aim of the MULC is an attempt (and a very premature one) at building a new communist organization.

2) Purpose of the MULC as you see it is to provide "an organized framework so that ideological struggle can take place in a systematic way on how to advance party building..." We see a much better framework being a M-L journal not a weekend conference where matters will only be touched upon and little can be resolved.

3) You allow and even seem to encourage more than one party-building plan to come out at the MULC. We believe that on every question there is one correct M-L line and that must be struggled for for the winning of that line and its implementation in practice in what moves us forward to proletarian revolution not the acceptance of 2,3 many lines.

Comrades, we are keeping our response to your proposal very short as we did not have the time to develop it and meet the March 3 deadline. From the above we think you can see our views of the MULC and the views we have of what road to take in regards to party building. We would like to see a meeting of the various collectives you have invited to the MULC and with the criteria for attendance you have made. However

the agenda for the meeting should be quite a bit different than what you have outlined. We think the section on content titled "Focus of Struggle" should be the agenda of the conference with the following changes the sections on "Fusion", "winning advanced workers", "Other tasks", "Winning the broad masses", and "The main danger" should be omitted substituted for this should be a discussion on how to carry out further ideological struggle among the groups, how the struggle should be organized and ~~xxxx~~ summed up and a unified position decided on. Our suggestion is the formation of a M-L journal to be the form for the struggle and then we would have to discuss the details of implementing this plan. Comrades, drawing lines of demarcation to clearly delineate the Marxist-Leninist trend is the key link and the issue that must be taken up; from this we can begin to forge a center that will be the nucleus of a new Marxist-Leninist party in this country. Comrades, we plan to attend the MULC and struggle for our views altho we hope the framework of the MULC is changed to make that struggle more productive for the M-L Movement.

With Communist Greetings

WROC



4903 N. Albany
Chicago, Il 60625

ant, but not essential to moving party building forward at this time at the MULC. Exclude those points listed as "Other tasks and questions". I.E.) "The Main Danger", again this is important, but not essential at this time. II.) As a whole there is too much material covered to allow for comrades to fully prepare for the MULC (concentrating their study and writing on party building) or for many of these issues to even be read to the conference- these presentations could end up dominating the discussion on the first day- which would deviate from the purpose of the whole conference.

LOGISTICAL CHANGES:

The location should be changed to meet political rather than geographical considerations. The majority of those forces who are being asked to attend live in the Bay area. More than 1/3 of the groups are based there; they could jointly provide far better resources (for printing ect), could mobilize many forces for carry out tasks for the conference (food preparations etc), could cut costs drastically by providing lodging, and could provide security, that the very limited forces in Chicago or KCRWC-WCC could not. Most importantly having the conference there could allow for many more rank and file cadre, and contacts to participate in the struggle. More ML forces will mean better preparation and the higher likelihood of politically moving a significant number of forces forward. (We would have to ask the Bay Area forces to sacrifice funds that would normally have gone to lodging & transportation to help comrades in Chicago, KC and NYC to make the longer trip. Even so the total cost of the conference on our limited resources will be less having it in California).

MOVE PARTY BUILDING FORWARD! BUILD FOR THE MULC!

 **REVOLUTIONARY
WORKERS PRESS**
PO BOX 11421
DENVER, CO 80211 

March
1979

RESPONSE TO THE CALL FOR A MULTILATERAL CONFERENCE (MULC) ON PARTY BUILDING

It is of great significance that forces who oppose both Russian and Chinese modern revisionism are willing and able to come together in the struggle for unity. The calling of this conference should be warmly welcomed by Marxist-Leninist and revolutionary forces in the US who see construction of a new Communist party as a necessary prerequisite to the destruction of the US imperialist system and the establishment of socialism.

But we must be aware from the outset that there are very likely as many divergencies and tendencies among us as among those who openly broke with Russian revisionism in the 60's & 70's. We must cast away the illusion that merely because we share a common (and this is also limited) critique of the anti-Leninist nature of the present rulers of China and their "theory of the 3 worlds" that unity will be easily achieved in other areas. Our histories, our origins, our practice and in many cases the foundations of our beliefs cover the entire spectrum of the US Communist movement.

If we recognize the arduous task that lays ahead of us we will not be subject to idealism in regards to the possible results of one conference (the MULC). In announcement letter the comrades write "Ideally, the MULC will result in a common party building plan that will be put into practice." (pg 2). This statement is entirely correct as a definition of a desired goal. A conscious and systematic plan is of crucial importance to ML forces. We would be bowing to spontaneity to proceed without articulated methods and aims toward the construction of a party. But to assume that a plan will emerge from a meeting of such a wide variety of forces (at this time) is to think "ideally" and not based on sound and realistic goals. In fact the discussion of the content of such a plan is not even scheduled in the outline agenda for the conference.

Party building has 2 aspects;

1-The forging of steel-like unity, ever greater ideological, political and numerical unity among ML and advanced forces
 2-drawing firm lines of demarcation between ourselves and opportunism of every hue- strengthening ourselves by purging the ranks. How should we view the MULC in light of these two aspects? There is the strong possibility that before the MULC ends that several splits and realignments could occur. The announcement letter notes this possibility without saying whether it thinks that this would be a positive or negative event, but the implication is that it is time "to get it on", time to draw lines of demarcation that would speed the party building process. It is possible that some other forces are also advocating that these splits are desirable- that the drawing out of the best elements from some existing circles, the purging of the ranks within other circles, and the consolidation of the most bolshevized elements, is in the best interest of the party. While it is true that many circles are primitive, bogged down in the mire of continual local work or "internal struggle", while it is true that certain "backward" cadre are a constraint on the whole circle and thereby on that group's ability to push party building forward, it does not automatically follow that purging the ranks at this time will solve the problem. This view reflects impatience and a failure to look at the concrete conditions in our movement. If we were faced with a movement that had a considerable level of unity that was being held back by certain elements who persisted in hanging on to their small groups- then perhaps a case could be made for encouraging a split among the ranks. But our situation is different. There is insufficient unity or clarity among our forces to draw firm lines among us.

Neither the drawing of lines too quickly nor hastily achieved unity will aid party building. The recent history of the US Communist movement is full of examples of each of these errors. We need a long process of struggle and sorting out before qualitative progress can be made. Splits on the basis of a party building plan would at this point be premature. We would be jumping ahead of the objective conditions of our movement. No one line of demarcation should separate sham from genuine forces at this time. What we need at this point is an open and above board development of line, full and open discussion and struggle before lines can legitimately be drawn.

The introductory paragraph of the announcement letter states that..."Such forms of struggle (referring to the Joint Statement & the preparation for the Denver forum on the international situation) have facilitated the development of the content and unity in our party building movement, and while they should continue, we should recognize that they have taken us about as far as they can." These forms of struggle have not taken us "as far as they can." They should be developed and expanded. More concrete forms of joint practice and efforts should be developed that can build a basis among us for a common party building plan in the future. The MULC is one of those forms, the proposed conference on the international situation another, joint journals for political struggle, nationally coordinated campaigns etc all should be considered as leading up to and part of a party building plan. Time should be set aside at the MULC to discuss the results of the old forms and new ones as well for the future.

THE PURPOSE OF THE MULTILATERAL CONFERENCE; a proposed change

The possibility of motion towards a party building plan is entirely possible, but without political unity on a broad number of issues and fundamental unity existing between various organizations, no comprehensive plan is possible.

The purpose and objective of the MULC should be twofold;

- 1) The exchange of views, histories, and our stand on party building (generally as outlined in the announcement letter).
- 2) Agreement through discussion of our aims and methods for the development of ideological and political struggle.

The struggle in the US Communist movement needs to be systematically deepened and broadened. It should be waged in a full and open manner. We can seek methods by which organizations and individuals can exchange views, criticize, polemicize, and most importantly develop in the course of struggle. At the present time there is scant communication between our organizations. Struggle or polemics are developed in relation to local conditions or at some local opportunists. The communist movement must though direct itself at struggle on a national level. We have an obligation to address ourselves not only to each other, but to the revolutionary movement as a whole. It is entirely possible that the MULC could make a break-through in this area.

ON THE CRITERIA FOR ATTENDING:

The letter states "POU's establish a common denominator." There are surely those that will argue that this is a very low common denominator- they are right. The process of sorting out, of drawing lines of demarcation has yet to begin in earnest among us. But, their argument will follow that what we need is not a gathering of such a wide variety of forces; rather a welding of a rock solid core, a scaffolding around which a genuine trend can be built. This is likewise true, but with a few exceptions, forces are only now in the process of determining their stand on many of the burning questions of our day. The conditions for the formation of a trend of a single line do not yet exist. There is considerable disorientation occurring as a result of China's political turn, the PLA's criticism of Mao, etc. For all these reasons it was correct to set the POU's at a level that would include many forces that are interested in engaging in struggle.

OTHER PROPOSED CHANGES:

The Focus of Struggle needs to become shorter. In skimming over the agenda and the time allowed for each area it becomes clear that it is idealistic to assume that we will be able to cover all these areas. Strict time limits should be placed on the verbal presentations of each group at the beginning of each discussion (perhaps just a summary of their written positions which we will have read beforehand). The "Circles and Individuals which we will have read beforehand). The "Circles and Individuals histroy" should not take the entire morning, perhaps just 10 minutes delegated to each. I.D.) "Fusion": could be combined with I.D.) "Winning the Broad Masses" I.C.)1. "Recent history of the US communist movement" should mainly center around recent party building efforts and their errors and lessons for us. Consider dropping the part on periods until future conferences. I.C.)a2 This whole question on "winning advanced Workers" is very import-