

Proletarian Unity League

## 2, 3, Many Parties of a New Type? Against the Ultra-Left Line

### Chapter 5: The Social and Ideological Roots of "Left" Opportunism G. On the Philosophical Roots of "Left" Opportunism

The common evolutionist framework of modern revisionism and present-day "Left-Wing" Communism relates in turn to their philosophical positions. The theory of knowledge which underlies both anti-Marxist trends has departed from the fundamental theses of dialectical materialism. In their place, each substitutes elements of metaphysics and idealism. Here lie the epistemological roots of "left" and Right opportunism.

These anti-materialist positions extend over a broad range of philosophical issues, too broad a range to discuss in the bounds of the present chapter. For the purposes of this section, we will concentrate on a single vital problem: the relation between relative and absolute truth. By looking at the stands of modern revisionism and ultra-leftism on this critical question, we can see the complementary nature of their epistemological positions. Moreover, in dealing with the philosophical errors of "leftism," we will take up the relation between "left" opportunism as it exists in the communist movement and its degeneration into "left" revisionism.

The Marxist position on absolute and relative truth can be summarized in three interrelated theses.

First, dialectical materialism asserts the primacy and the independence of the thing in relation to the knowledge of the thing. This is the fundamental tenet of all materialism.

Second, from the independent and primary existence of the thing follows the necessary existence of absolute truth. Absolute truth means knowledge of a thing which reflects the objective reality of a thing in a completely faithful, absolute, and unconditional way. If consciousness reflects reality, then absolute truth must exist. Human knowledge consists in an infinite process of continually approaching but never reaching absolute truth.

Third, absolute truth resides in the accumulation of relative truths. Relative truth means knowledge of a thing which reflects the thing in an approximate, incomplete and conditional way. The historical conditions of scientific knowledge render our knowledge of nature and of society relative at any given stage. But all relative knowledge, if it is true relative knowledge (i.e., in fact reflects objective reality) contains within it what Lenin calls a "grain" of absolute truth (for this point and others, see **Materialism and Empirio-Criticism**, Chapter II, Part 5). Absolute and relative truth constitute the two philosophical categories by which Marxists represent the historical process of knowing objective reality.

### Relativism and Metaphysical Dogmatism

The philosophical positions generally adopted by modern revisionism and contemporary "Left-Wing Communism" both breach the dialectical unity of absolute and relative truths. Broadly speaking, the modern revisionists treat all truth as relative. In philosophy, this position is known as relativism. Relativism rejects the existence of absolute truth., which

amounts in the final analysis to a rejection of the primacy and independence of matter. The conception of truth which results has a subjective and empiricist character.

Contemporary "Left-Wing Communism" tends in the opposite direction. It treats all truth as absolute. This philosophical position has been called metaphysical dogmatism. Like all metaphysics, metaphysical dogmatism regards mental and material phenomena as discrete, isolated units, unrelated among themselves. For metaphysical dogmatism, there is truth, which is absolute, and there is error. Since relative truth necessarily entails relative error, metaphysical dogmatism rejects the category of relative truth, seeing no possible relation between absolute and relative truth.

To illustrate the relations between relativism and metaphysical dogmatism on the one side, and modern revisionism and present-day "Leftism" on the other, we will examine the effects the different philosophical positions have on their conceptions of Marxism-Leninism.

Marxist-Leninists regard the principles of Marxism-Leninism as having universal significance. In other words, they hold that Marxism-Leninism contains absolute truth. This does not mean that the principles of Marxism-Leninism constitute a complete and unconditional reflection of history.

"The sole conclusion to be drawn from the opinion held by Marxists that Marx's theory is an objective truth is that by following the **path** of Marxian theory we shall draw closer and closer to objective truth (without ever exhausting it); but by following **any other path** we shall arrive at nothing but confusion and lies." (**Materialism and Empirio-Criticism, CW 14**, p. 143)

The universal significance of Marxism-Leninism lies in its general theory of the modes of production, their structure and function, and the forms of transition between one and another. But this general theory only becomes operative in concrete analyses of specific historical situations. Where revolutionaries have united the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism with the concrete practice of revolution in their country, they have produced relatively complete reflections of reality. These concrete analyses of concrete conditions have contained absolute truth insofar as they have permitted the revolutionary transformation of a given society at a given time. In other words, they have correctly reflected the relation of class forces and tendential development of the society. Insofar as the continuing revolutionary process is concerned, however, these analyses have amounted to mainly incomplete, relative truth.

Modern revisionism denies the universal significance of Marxism-Leninism. This denial takes two forms. First, it regards the truth of Marxism-Leninism as only relative. For example, it views Marx, Engels, and Lenin's theses on the absolute necessity of the dictatorship of the proletariat for the transitional period from capitalism to communism as relative to the time and place. "The dictatorship of the proletariat is all very well for backward societies like Russia," the revisionists say, "but quite unnecessary for *advanced* capitalist countries." Or, "Marx meant the leading role of the proletariat in the nineteenth century, but he did not and could not have foreseen the scientific-technical revolution of the mid-twentieth century. This revolution has diminished the proletariat's role and increased that of other fractions of the working people."

At the same time, modern revisionism rejects the absolute truth of Marxism-Leninism as false **because it is absolute**. In other words, it sorts out the truth of Marxism-Leninism into the relatively true, and the false. For

example, it argues that the Marxist-Leninist thesis on the absolute necessity of destroying the bourgeois state apparatus is either true relative to the country (backward Russia but not enlightened France) or false if applied everywhere. "The idea that the bourgeois state apparatus **must** be destroyed is as false as the idea that we never use violence," cry the more clever revisionists. "Everything is relative to the concrete conditions. As a universal thesis, this is false."

Contemporary "Left-Wing" Communism reverses the revisionist equation. Instead of reducing Marxism-Leninism to relative truth, it equates Marxism-Leninism with absolute truth. The metaphysical dogmatism which underlies this position denies that absolute truth only exists in accumulated relative truth. It does not recognize the dependence of absolute truth on relative truth. This position results in a two-fold movement. Either it sees the absolute truth in certain relative truths, and therefore elevates these to the status of an absolute. Or the ultra-lefts see the limitations of certain relative truths, their relative error when applied indiscriminately, and therefore denounce these relative truths as false. The first movement necessarily implies the second, though one may predominate in a given variety of ultra-leftism for a period of time. The interconnection between the two provides a philosophical basis not only for "left" opportunism, but also for "left" revisionism.

### **Metaphysical Dogmatism in the U.S. Communist Movement**

Throughout the earlier chapters, we have seen many examples of how the ultra-lefts take certain relative truths for absolutes. The **Iskra** tactic did respond to the concrete needs of the Russian revolutionary movement at a given moment. It permitted the revolutionary movement to rally its forces around a proletarian line. Lenin's arguments for the **Iskra** tactic represented relative truth, and that relative truth itself contained a "grain" of absolute truth. Seeing the "grain" of absolute truth in the **Iskra** experience, some comrades have mistaken the **Iskra** experience for an absolute truth, and elevated it to absolute status – the "Iskra principle." The same goes for raising the specific methods of Bolshevization adopted by the Communist Parties of the 1920's into principles (i.e., factory nuclei-ism), or for the October League's on-again, off-again "principle" of "no unity of action with the revisionists," and in general for the raising of tactics into strategies or principles.

The elevation of some relative truths to the status of absolutes implies the rejection of other relative truths as falsehoods. If absolute truth does not reside in accumulated relative truths, but by itself, then relative truths have no relation to the truth whatsoever. If we can prove that a given truth has "only" a relative value, depending on time and place, then it is not a truth at all, but a falsehood. The dismissal of relative truth follows from the typically metaphysical opposition drawn between different concepts as well as between different material phenomena. Metaphysical dogmatism thereby promotes the importation of anarchist principles.

The ultra-left trend contains countless examples of this metaphysical thinking and its semi-anarchist consequences. We will restrict ourselves to the questions of bourgeois democracy and the tactics of the united front. As regards bourgeois democracy, metaphysical dogmatism reasons as follows: the proletariat seeks to overthrow bourgeois dictatorship and establish its own dictatorship. Under bourgeois dictatorship, we have bourgeois democracy; under proletarian dictatorship, proletarian democracy. Therefore we oppose bourgeois democracy. In a relative sense, this is true. We oppose democracy for the bourgeoisie and dictatorship over the masses. But metaphysical dogmatists, like the WVO, raise this relative truth to an absolute. They therefore\*reject the truth that in capitalist society, the proletariat cannot help

but march side by side with bourgeois democracy in certain situations. They spurn the necessity to fight for the most consistent democracy even under bourgeois rule, to extend and defend the bourgeois democratic rights which the masses possess against the bourgeoisie's perpetual attempts to limit those rights, to take them back, to reduce them to nothing. "How can we fight for bourgeois democratic rights?" they whine. "We are fighting for proletarian democracy! Either we oppose bourgeois democracy, in which case we cannot *march* side by side with it under any conditions, or we march side by side with it, in which case we do not oppose it." Metaphysical dogmatists cannot grasp the basic Marxist-Leninist principles behind the communist support of bourgeois democratic rights against the bourgeoisie, and their simultaneous work to overthrow bourgeois dictatorship. They cannot see how we can both march side by side with bourgeois democracy and prepare the masses to overthrow it; *more – how we march side by side with bourgeois democracy in order to overthrow it.*

The well-known tendency for ultra-left organizations to veer widely from the extreme "Left" to the Right and back again also has philosophical *roots* in meta-physical dogmatism. Among the numerous about-faces of the October League, its two completely different lines on the candidacies of Ed Sadlowski stand out. In August 1973, the OL said "it was the duty of the entire working *class* and its leadership to stand behind" Sadlowski's reform campaign for leadership in the steelworkers' District 31. It opposed the slogan "critical support" with a call for "full support." In 1976, however, the OL called for a boycott of Sadlowski's campaign for the President of the union, claiming that "Sادلowski's opposition to Abel in no way promises any real significant changes in the USWA because it, like Abel's is based on reformism and big business unionism rather than class struggle." (**The Call**, Aug. 9) It opposed "critical support" with a call for "no support."

This is typically metaphysical logic, and lands the OL first in a reformist, Right position, and then in an ultra-left one. If we support, then we do not criticize. If we criticize, then we do not support. The Chinese Revolution saw a similar flip-flop in the person of Wang Ming. During the Second Revolutionary Civil War, the "left" line of Wang Ming dismissed any form of united front with the national bourgeoisie and even the upper stratum of the petit-bourgeoisie against imperialism and feudalism. Later, in the War of Resistance Against Japan, Wang Ming *propo* a complete merger of the Kuomintang and Communist forces, liquidating the independent role of the proletariat within the united front. If the proletariat puts forward its own program and slogans, and takes initiative, then no united front. If the proletariat enters into alliance with other class forces, then no independence and initiative.

By raising some features of Marxism-Leninism into absolutes and rejecting others, the October League and other ultra-lefts dissolve the dialectical unity of Marxist-Leninist principles and substitute anarchist and Trotskyite nonsense. The PRRWO/RWL have blazed the way with their "united front only from below." If the October League does not repudiate its "left" opportunist line, it will lead them, in fact if not openly in their theory, to the anarchist united front "only from below." Persisted in, metaphysical dogmatism provides philosophical justification for a complete degeneration into "left" revisionism.

### **"Left" Opportunism and "Left" Revisionism**

As many articles have noted, most of the earliest anti-revisionist organizations collapsed into semi-anarchism and semi-Trotskyism. The stench from their decay lingers above the present-day U.S. Communist movement. Surveying the disasters left in the wake of the "left" opportunist line, the

counterrevolutionary antics of groups like the PRRWO/RWL and WVO, and the strong Trotskyite influence in the CLP, many comrades have warned the movement against falling victim to the same disease.

Metaphysical dogmatism systematizes the subjectivism and one-sidedness of the radicalized intelligentsia. When carried to its logical conclusions, it paves the way for counter-revolutionary politics. The Provisional Organizing Committee, the Progressive Labor Party, the Marxist-Leninist Organization U.S.A., and others did not satisfy themselves with somewhat one-sided exaggerations of certain Marxist-Leninist principles. No, they sought out the "roots" of revisionism, and found them in a whole series of policies which, if applied indiscriminately, would do great damage to the proletarian revolution. If the Indonesian Party followed an opportunist policy on the united front, then the united front with the national bourgeoisie in colonial, semi-colonial, and neo-colonial countries has to go, and Mao Tsetung with it. If modern revisionism converted the United Front Against Fascism into a strategy, then down with Dimitrov and the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International.<sup>1</sup>

The above discussion of metaphysical dogmatism points out the necessity for extending the ideological struggle against "left" opportunism to the philosophical realm. To prevent the emergence of full-fledged "left" revisionism within many communist organizations, to combat the rise of "two, three, many PLP's," we have to rout the metaphysical dogmatism and other philosophical errors upon which the "Left" line draws. Finally, the consolidation of "left" opportunism into a "left" revisionism points to the idealist premises of metaphysical dogmatism. We have said that metaphysical dogmatism conceives of absolute truth as independent of any relative truth. Relative truth means knowledge of a thing which reflects the thing in a conditional way. The existence of an absolute truth which is not dependent on any conditional reflection therefore implies a truth transcendent of all conditions, exterior to reality itself. This is of course the first thesis of idealism—the primacy and independence of knowledge of a thing in relation to the thing itself. A consistent metaphysical dogmatism can only lead to idealism, whether subjective idealism (in which the ideas, sense perceptions, or consciousness of the individual subject are primary or even constitutive of the world) or objective idealism (which bases itself on a kind of absolute mind, absolute idea, or universal will existing independently of human subjects).

Insofar as the "Left Wing" of our movement adheres to any consistent philosophical position, this position borrows most heavily from subjective idealism. At the same time, our "Lefts" have taken over certain categories from objective idealism, particularly from Hegelian dialectics.<sup>2</sup> In truth, the general philosophical orientation of the "Left" trend in our movement represents more of a method than an achieved philosophical system in which all categories stand in some definite relation to one another. This method has a name: eclecticism.

"All-sided, universal flexibility of concepts, a flexibility reaching to the identity of opposites—that is the essence of the matter. This flexibility, **applied subjectively** = eclecticism and sophistry." (Lenin, **CW 38**, p. 110)

These philosophical and methodological deviations produce definite effects in theory and in the political and organizational line of the communist movement. By way of summing up this discussion of the philosophical position of "left" opportunism, we will consider how metaphysical dogmatism and a closely-related error provide a philosophical shield for "left" sectarianism and voluntarism in party-building line.

## Dialectical Materialism and Party-Formation

The "Lefts" invariably justify their "left" sectarian activity by pointing to the undeniable need for "firm lines of demarcation." Lenin held that, "before we can unite, and in order that we may unite, we must first draw firm and definite lines of demarcation." In other words, lines of demarcation do not constitute an absolute: they belong to a dialectical process of unity/struggle/unity, and are conditioned by the pursuit of principled unity. This relationship between unity and struggle in party-building is a particular case of the unity of objective and subjective, of practice and theory.

Unity among Marxist-Leninists demands more than simply agreement around a few general goals (the Party, communism, even the dictatorship of the proletariat). After all, in a pinch anarchism and Marxism-Leninism share something like the same final aim of a classless society. Groups can concoct all sorts of ideas about the "final aims" and "revolutionary character" of working class struggle. But unless they attempt to represent these ideas in the enforcement of the momentary interests of the proletariat, unless they struggle to articulate a connection between the daily skirmishes and the "final conflict," those final aims have no reality. Only in the struggle to unite the general with the particular can incorrect conceptions—of the "future interests," of the "momentary interests," or of the link between them—crystallize and provide a basis for principled struggle and debate. Only when Marxist-Leninists maintain this link will they draw lines of demarcation comprehensible to all concerned.

It takes only paper to conduct polemics on the proletariat's world historic destiny. It takes organization to attempt to articulate that destiny from within the daily working class struggle. Forging a link between the proletariat's short-and long-term interests, confronting an idea about the reform struggle with the actual line of battle, requires moving from theoretical struggle to practical unity of action.

Metaphysical dogmatism supports a completely different line. Since absolute truths do not depend on any relative truths—or general truths on any particular truths—metaphysical dogmatism does not conceptualize any need to pass from struggle over "final aims" to unity of action in order to render the general concrete and particular. Instead, with faultless "future interests" in hand, the metaphysical dogmatists preach to the present to catch up. Like the Utopians of old, they dream up a more perfect present, one more in harmony with their final aims, one in which the final aims appear as big as life. In the Trotskyite movement, the fabled Transitional Program, composed of "perfect" "revolutionary" demands which merge the future and the present into a single Transition, serves this function. In the anti-revisionist movement, the pursuit of the True Concession plays a similar role. Protected against the rude shocks of the actual class struggle, metaphysical dogmatists have no basis for uniting with other forces in order to verify their brilliant ideas.

Since they raise particular features of Marxism-Leninism to Absolutes, "making a trend out of isolated formulas," the "Lefts" can endlessly multiply the "principled lines of demarcation," inventing new "principles" and "anti-revisionist premises," etc. Given that partial or relative truths are innumerable, the dogmatic manufacture of universal truth knows no limits. Translated into the realm of party-building, this means the deliberate manufacture of differences. Metaphysical dogmatism therefore aids the growth of Trotskyism and other forms of "left" revisionism in our movement. Where Marxist-Leninists believe that the unity of proletarian interests must be reflected in the unity of the proletarian party, Trotskyites praise the "normal"

struggle of factions and trends, each of which has the "right" to existence in the communist movement or Party, and deplore its "abnormal" unity.<sup>3</sup> In this way, the Trotskyites attempt to sanctify the coexistence of bourgeois and proletarian ideology in the workers' movement, in other words, the permanent division and splitting of the workers' movement.

One cannot go on endlessly drawing "firm lines of demarcation." Those lines have to be drawn "in" something, or no one will notice them. If revolutionary-minded people do not recognize a line of demarcation, then it hasn't really been drawn. In order to develop a greater unity of views around principled positions, communists must combine alliance and struggle, unity and differentiation. Where the present basis for differentiating positions is insufficient, unity of action is necessary to further demarcation. Less theoretically schooled comrades may not grasp the difference in principle at an abstract level, or the undeveloped state of the class struggle simply may not support one definitive conclusion over another. Then the need for unity of action arises in order to provide the means to understand how a difference in principle translates in the revolutionary struggle. Comrade Harry Haywood describes this problem in discussing anti-revisionist activities within the CPUSA in the late 'fifties:

"...the formulation and fight for a correct mass line and its implementation as an inseparable part of the fight for ideological clarity is a key task of the left forces in advancing the struggle against revisionism and conciliationism. Only in this way could the struggle be brought out of the realm of what many less developed comrades feel to be abstract theory of no particular importance to them, into the realm of practical application which these comrades could grasp more easily. For it is in the field of practical work that all differences become clearly focused at every turn—at every point where a choice of what course of action to follow must be made." ("Letter from Harry Haywood to the POC," **Class Struggle**, Spring, 1975)

This course of action corresponds, we believe, to the actual situation of a communist movement to which semi-anarchists, anarcho-Trotskyites, and other petit-bourgeois phrasemongers have attached themselves and in danger of resembling nothing so much as the Trotskyites of this country, swarming with parties and sundry parasitic sects.

Where metaphysical dogmatism rationalizes the endless manufacture of differences, a closely-related philosophical error helps shore up adventurist stabs at party-formation. This error consists in breaching the dialectical unity of the quantitative and the qualitative. Like the error of metaphysically opposing absolute to relative truth, this error betrays subjective idealist influence.

### **A Leap into the "Absolute"**

The formation of the Marxist-Leninist party represents a qualitative leap. But this qualitative leap exists in a dialectical relationship, in a struggle of opposites, with the quantitative preparation which precedes it. Declaring a lower form of organization—a democratic-centralist league or other type of pre-party formation, a large number of circles, etc.—the vanguard party (or even **the** Party nucleus of the vanguard party) demands a detailed quantitative analysis. A materialist needs to know why such a change can occur today and did not occur yesterday, what real transformation has taken place in the work of the organization, its ties to the masses and its unification of the genuine communist forces, and how the ideological, political, and organizational line has been verified and rectified through revolutionary practice. The formation of the party must represent a "radical rupture" with

previous forms of organization. All deviations in party-building metaphysically oppose quality to quantity, severing the dialectical unity of the two aspects. In absolutizing one aspect of the contradiction, they effectively collapse one into the other.

The "Lefts" denounce as "Menshevik opportunism," as "opposition to any and all efforts at party-building," any suggestion that the ideological or practical conditions do not exist for their particular "leap." They rupture the dialectical relationship between quantity and quality, acting as if qualitative leaps do not depend on any quantitative changes. But real Communist Parties cannot be summoned into existence by an act of will, nor Party Congresses have meaning for the working class simply because one wants them to. The qualitative leap to a Marxist-Leninist Party can only occur on the basis of sustained ideological, political, and organizational work, through the meeting of definite preconditions recognized essential by revolutionaries. In other words, the qualitative leap to a Party exists in a certain quantity, just as absolute truth only exists in an accumulation of relative truths.

"...we must attend to the quantitative aspect of a situation or problem and make a basic quantitative analysis. Every quality manifests itself in a certain quantity, and without quantity there can be no quality. To this day many of our comrades still do not understand that they must attend to the quantitative aspect of things—the basic statistics, the main percentages, and the quantitative limits that determine the qualities of things." (Mao, SW IV, p. 379)

Our several parties and parties-to-be practice metaphysics and idealism, not dialectics and materialism. Because the "Lefts" do not venture beyond their own impetuosity, they do not recognize any objective existence to the communist movement. Armed with a definition of Marxist-Leninists that revolves around themselves and dizzy with some momentary successes, they cannot discern the real subjective and objective conditions necessary to the transformation of the movement into a communist party. That no qualitative change separates the Revolutionary Communist Party from the RU, or the Communist Labor Party from the Communist League and its few allies, or the October League (M-L) and Workers Viewpoint Organization from whatever title they decide to claim for their parties gives one more demonstration of the metaphysical and idealist character of their ideology.<sup>4</sup>

\*Subordinated to this overt idealism, and serving as its "collaborator and accomplice," is an empiricist or positivist outlook, just as a certain type of evolutionism accompanied the voluntaristic party-formations we analyzed in Chapter Three, Section B. This empiricist outlook encourages a gradualist perspective, one which views party-building as the incremental, evolutionary growth of a single organization. At a given moment, when the group has "enough" recruits or "enough" geographical spread, that group can call for "unity on the basis of Marxism-Leninism," which in practice means around itself, and leapfrog into the sectarian wasteland.

---

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Recently, a few sham "Marxist-Leninist" circles have warmed up the very same Trotskyite leftovers to support the "Gang of Four" in China against the "revisionism" of the CPC, the PLA, and the Chinese masses. That old chestnut about the takeover of the international communist movement by revisionism at the Comintern Seventh Congress puts in a tired appearance. See the first issue of **Forward**, newspaper of the CWG(M-L). Watch your **People's Tribune** for future developments.

---

<sup>2</sup> "Left" deviations most often draw upon subjective idealist philosophical positions. Marx and Engels frequently pointed out the philosophical allegiance which Bakunin owed Stirner, whose solipsism represents the logical outcome of subjective idealism. The "Lefts" in the early German Social-Democratic Party sought justification in the subjective idealist positions of Duhring. Lenin's only complete philosophical work, **Materialism and Empirio-Criticism**, directs itself against the subjective idealism of Bogdanov and *company*, who represented in philosophy the otzovists, or "left" liquidators.

Right deviations, on the other hand, most often accompany mechanical materialist positions in philosophy. But the history of the international communist movement does not suggest any universal typology. The relativism of modern revisionism culminates in a subjectivist empiricism, in which all truth becomes relative to the individual's conception of "facts." And objective idealism, of which Hegel's is the best known, may also underlie "Left" deviations. The CPSU(B) argued that the Deborin school in the Soviet Union, which took Hegelian dialectics for Marxist dialectics, represented the Trotskyite deviation in philosophy. And Mao noted

"Deborin's idealism has exerted a very bad influence in the Chinese Communist Party, and it cannot be said that the dogmatist thinking in our Party is unrelated to the approach of that school." (**SW 1**, p. 311)

In this regard, it is significant that the CLP also mistakes Hegelian for Marxist dialectics (see the signed appendix to Chapter Five).

<sup>3</sup> See Agim Popa, "Present-Day Revolutionary Movement and Trotskyism," **Albania Today**, V:6, 1972; reprinted by ATM (M-L) and others.

<sup>4</sup> Subordinated to this overt idealism, and serving as its "collaborator and accomplice," is an empiricist or positivist outlook, just as a certain type of evolutionism accompanied the voluntaristic party-formations we analyzed in Chapter Three, Section B. This empiricist outlook encourages a gradualist perspective, one which views party-building as the incremental, evolutionary growth of a single organization. At a given moment, when the group has "enough" recruits or "enough" geographical spread, that group can call for "unity on the basis of Marxism-Leninism," which in practice means around itself, and leapfrog into the sectarian wasteland.