

OUR FUNDAMENTAL DISAGREEMENTS WITH THE LIQUIDATIONIST PROPOSAL FOR
A "COMMON EDITORIAL POLICY"

NEVER FORGET CLASS STRUGGLE!

July, 1976

Since the Unity Conference, the WC-ML has taken important initial steps in advancing its work. Where the Iskra plan was correctly implemented, as we feel it has been in New York, there were tremendous gains. Several collectives have openly declared their support of the Iskra plan, and have joined in building The Communist. In addition, almost every communist group has had, if only in words, to put forward that propaganda is the chief form of activity, a line only held by us until recently. On the other hand, while there has been forward motion, a rightist, economist line has been trying to drag the organization backwards into worshipping the spontaneous movement and capitulating to opportunism in the communist movement. The struggle against this line, which has been put forward by various forces in various forms, has led to an ongoing internal crisis in the organization. Its growing dominance has forced several important forces out of the organization. It was in this context that we studied the recent proposal "Toward Common Propaganda for the Leninist Trend."

This proposal promises to fulfill a much-needed task, to "aggressively deepen and develop our line around party-building." Yet instead of correctly analyzing the root of our errors and laying out a plan to advance, this proposal, as we will show, actually reverses our organization's line on a number of key points, especially around implementation of the Iskra plan. It has become one of the clearest expressions of the right deviationist line in our own ranks and has been vigorously promoted by our main proponents of petty-bourgeois democracy, and especially by Howard Engleskirchen, who made this proposal, and who has become the chief spokesman for opportunism in the WC-ML.

1) Howard's proposal makes a straight-up capitulation with the line of "political line is the key link to party-building." It says that we can develop a "common editorial policy" that would facilitate having one editorial board in the future attaining unity on one given political "issue" or question at a time. This position attempts to have us overlook the present ideological backwardness of the forces mentioned. Their ideological errors are the basis and lie at the root of their political and organizational errors, not just in their statements, but also in their practical activity. Howard's views on the groups that are, or formerly were, in the "revolutionary wing" idealistically ignore the present political

dishonesty and corruption of these forces. If we were to present this policy to them, they would laugh in our faces, even if we abandoned our present views. Even if this editorial policy were possible, it would only lead to another unholy alliance like the "revolutionary wing." Howard doesn't want us to demand from these forces that they change their present erroneous ideological stance before we can unite and publish a common organ. But as Lenin said:

"Before we can unite, and in order that we may unite, we must first of all firmly and definitely draw the lines of demarcation between the various groups. Otherwise, our unity will be merely a fictitious unity, which will conceal the prevailing confusion and prevent its dispersion."
(Declaration by the Editorial Board of Iskra)

Howard's position, in essence, agrees with the line that an ideological break has already been made with revisionism, and that the chief focus should be on developing and debating political line. It bows to all sorts of lines previously defeated in our organization. For example, it says on page five that many groups spontaneously adopted the line of the Communist Party of China against revisionism in Angola, negating the struggle in the old Black Workers' Congress against saying that revisionism can be overcome spontaneously ("Leninism and Petty-Bourgeois Democracy," p. 4-5.) It nowhere lays out a concrete analysis of trends in the communist movement, and does not attempt to analyze the recent developments, especially those of forces we were formerly closer to, who have strayed from the Leninist path of party building, like Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers' Organization, August Twenty-Ninth Movement, and Workers' Viewpoint Organization. What is presented here is really a cover-up of the ideological chaos and the present dominance of economism and revisionism in our movement -- an attempt to "conceal the prevailing confusion and prevent its dispersion." Remember that when Iskra attempted to unite with Rabochaya Dyelo, the genuine forces insisted on a complete repudiation of all opportunism, and not some "common editorial policy" full of compromises on principle. (See the appendix to What Is To Be Done?) But instead of following Lenin's example and demanding that these other forces abandon their present views on party building, including their attack on the Iskra plan as "dogmatic," and "ultra-'left,'" Howard wants to capitulate to them and liquidate the ideological struggle against their incorrect lines.

2) Howard's proposal liquidates the work of The Communist in its role as the leading instrument in the struggle for an Iskra-type newspaper. In essence, this is the liquidationist position criticized at our Unity Conference, which raised that every group should develop an Iskra-type paper of its own. Howard proposes an evolutionary process for arriving at unity of Marxist-Leninists by say, "Four newspapers of different organizations could be regularly distributed and used by four organizations as well as by independent collectives, etc." While it would not be hard to organize common exchange and distribution of papers, can or should the distribution of four papers serve not only the tasks of collective propagandist and collective agitator, but also of a collective organizer? What "four papers" are you talking about, anyway? The Call? August Twenty-Ninth Movement's paper? Workers' Viewpoint's? Marxist-Leninist Organizing Committee's? Congress of African People's paper? Comrades, how can we expect to use these papers, which are still mainly local, economist, and have many revisionist stands, to organize the network of agents from among the advanced workers and revolutionary intellectuals, and to train them to become leaders in building the party? How could these papers be used to lead the fight against right opportunism or prepare for the calling of a party congress? Iskra was the collective organizer for the revolutionary trend within Marxism. It developed in opposition to the economists of its day, their October Leagues and Revolutionary Unions, and attempted to win over their vacillators, their August Twenty-Ninth Movements and Marxist-Leninist Organizing Committees. Our task must be to fight like hell to build The Communist into the leading paper

and build around it the leading organization, winning to our side and line as many Marxist-Leninists and advanced workers as possible, and laying the basis for a founding party congress, as Iskra did. Yet the liquidation of the existence of trends, especially ignoring the confusion, disunity, and opportunism of forces such as August Twenty-Ninth Movement and Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers' Organization, leads to an idealist plan that throws out the history of the development of differences among these forces, resulting in their inability to cooperate closely among themselves or with us. At one time, Black Workers' Congress, Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers' Organization, August Twenty-Ninth Movement and others were developing into one common Leninist trend." Their embryonic unity was a result of their joint struggle against the right line of Revolutionary Union and the "left" line of Communist League. Yet since that time, many of these forces have gone astray, having been unable to consolidate their gains. Some vacillate on key questions of party building (August Twenty-Ninth Movement), while others have landed squarely in the marsh (what's left of Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers' Organization). In short, they play new roles today, and must be judged accordingly.

Along with this, it is a fact that you will get no one with any sense at all to distribute Palante (PRRWO's paper) unless to expose it for the rag it has become. These differences must be overcome first, not by the evolutionary method of agreeing point by point, but by seeking a radical rupture with opportunism and revisionism. Yet Howard wants evolution and not revolution, which is violent, ruthless and bloody. Our unity with these forces can only be on the basis of clearly drawn lines of demarcation, and not some least-common-denominator gimmick. Howard's proposal actually boils down to a return to reliance on coalitions as the chief method to build the party, although he has refrained from calling his plan of "joint consultations" and "unity of action" what it really is.

3) Howard degenerates to the level of a "creative" Marxist with his editorial policy. Nowhere can he find a clear example from Lenin to justify his new line. All he can do is attempt to "reinterpret" Lenin, or cite some unstated "new conditions," to attempt to render Lenin more profound. But what Lenin did say in such articles as "Declaration by the Editorial Board of Iskra," which united a number of circles and individuals to form an editorial board and build a network of agents, was that the paper should not be a storehouse of views but represent a definite trend. Lenin says it must be used to draw clear lines of demarcation, and not blur them. Now, as for the content of Howard's proposed paper, what little is offered in the proposal clearly shows that the author has no intention of taking up a sharp struggle against opportunism. We are told that the discussion around the other groups' papers should not go "into detail on every article." Instead, the focus is on unity as the key link, on writing articles on the international situation, where our differences are least. Class struggle on line as the basis for principled unity is replaced by class peace and unprincipled compromise. Howard nowhere even says who we should invite or exclude from his proposed venture, what we should do if forces which we want, would like to include forces which we oppose; if forces we want to include would like to exclude others whom we want to include; how we could have a viable and useful organ with diametrically opposed lines on such key questions as the role of propaganda, economism, busing, etc., etc. What we get is some idle dreaming that blurs the lines of demarcation and in no way helps us sort out the genuine from the sham. We are presented with three easy steps for unity that do not correspond to the depth of opportunism in the communist movement. No ideological break, no radical rupture with the past, just some meetings and general agreements that do not go "into detail on every point" and, poof! like magic, there is unity. It is clear this plan is not about our winning over these other forces, but is actually about Howard being won over by them, and wanting to drag the rest of the organization with him. The result of the "creative"

approach of Howard is, like all other attempts at revising Marxism-Leninism under the guise of "new conditions," ripping out the revolutionary heart from the Iskra plan by turning it from a plan for class struggle in the communist movement into a plan for conciliation with opportunism and blurring the lines of demarcation.

4) Howard's proposal is closely related to Kathy Chandler's attempt to change our line and drag us back into the marsh. His defense of Kathy Chandler and insistence that she be placed on the Central Committee is not isolated from the fact that they stand on common soil in opposing the fight for the leading role of The Communist, in conciliating to opportunism by painting the petty-bourgeois democrats of our movement in shining colors, by proposing idealist shortcuts instead of a practical plan to overcome the opportunism and disunity of our movement, and by replacing the Iskra plan with all sorts of "joint consultations" and coalitions to build the party. Both Howard and Kathy Chandler are right deviationist elements. Howard even wanted to ram his proposal down the throats of the organization by sending out letters to other groups, including the petty-bourgeois democrats of OL, announcing that this was our line, before the Central Committee had discussed or adopted the proposal. Fortunately, at that time, he was held back by two other members of the Political Standing Committee (PSC). Since then, these two comrades have left the organization because of the opportunism of the remaining PSC members. The reckless path taken by both Howard and Kathy Chandler, with each maneuvering in an unprincipled manner for their own ends, is an organizational reflection of their opportunism on ideological and political lines.

5) Unlike Howard, we state proudly and boldly that we still uphold the Iskra plan and the line of our organization adopted at our Unity Conference. Stalin wrote in Foundations of Leninism that the establishment of Iskra was the main link and main task for the Bolsheviks in forming their party, and put the question of determining the main link under the heading of tactical leadership (P. 95-7). We still affirm that the establishment of an Iskra-type newspaper is the main link for U.S. Marxist-Leninists to accomplish the task of building a party. Yet Howard's proposed paper, as we have shown, is clearly not an Iskra-type paper, but a "storehouse of views," a collective confuser that rests on the shaky foundation of unprincipled peace between opposing lines. Howard, in his demagogic rush to get his plan adopted, compares those who oppose his opportunist plan to the rightist Workers' Viewpoint Organization, who according to Howard, want to apply the lessons of What Is To Be Done? regarding Iskra to the U.S. by trying "to build a single newspaper into such an organ." Howard's response is "to jointly struggle to build a common organ." (p. 3) But Howard's criticisms of Workers' Viewpoint Organization totally miss the mark. For one thing, WVO does not just build its own paper, but tries to merge with other circles and groups (Revolutionary Workers' League even wanted to merge with them at one time). But WVO's errors are that they don't make propaganda their chief form of activity; that their main form of activity is putting our economist agitational garbage through their paper "coalitions"; that the line they are building their paper and organization around is incorrect; that they tail the advanced; and that they promote an American-exceptionalist line and plan of building the party around their "anti-revisionist premises." Howard gives them a lot more credit than they deserve by singling out their opposition to a joint paper as their chief deviation from What Is To Be Done? which WVO doesn't even recognize as the "ideological" foundation for the Marxist party. Again, a cheap cover-up of opportunism. WVO has never stood for an Iskra-type paper, and never will, until they break with their present opportunist line. By incorrectly criticizing WVO, Howard shows that he cannot distinguish between WVO's economist sheet and what an Iskra-type paper would really be. So much for Howard's conception of a genuine Iskra-type paper.

6) Our views on how to "aggressively deepen and develop our line around party-

building," unlike Howard's are based on an orthodox adherence to Lenin's line on party-building as applicable today, and recognition of our party-building resolutions as basically adequate as a guide to action, without needing any "creative" or "new" formulations. What we need to do is persist in our original plan, and not give up or "capitulate to difficulties" just because the world has not dropped at our feet after putting out the paper for the short time we have. Yet Howard, in a fashion typical of the petty bourgeoisie, has no faith in the ability of The Communist to build that network of agents to form the party, and is attempting to get the organization to cater to his petty-bourgeois demoralization by implementing his liquidationist proposal. Instead of being resolute and firm like a true bolshevik should be, Howard has cried out, "Difficulties have set in. Is it not time to quit?" If you want to quit, then go ahead, for no one is stopping you. But as for us, we intend to press on.

It is significant that Howard's plan ignores the question of winning the advanced workers ideologically to communism. In the past, we boldly and properly declared that this was central to party building. Now, this new "deepening" of our line drops this almost entirely. The PSC should be giving leadership in doing a sum-up of our progress, or lack of it, in developing propaganda circles and networks of agents; and of training revolutionary leaders from among the advanced; instead of dreaming up some crazy, unworkable plan as they have. The PSC's specific guidance to the organization had already for months been veering away from the Iskra plan. For example, it encouraged a loose "friends of The Communist" in New York, along the lines of the "discussion meetings" Lenin called "wholly unnecessary" in "A Letter to a Comrade on Our Organizational Tasks," because they liquidated the task of building factory nuclei. This group was supposed to be composed only of intellectuals, separated from the advanced workers. And it also was an attempt at undermining the formation of centralized organization and the leadership at the local level because the PSC wanted this group to maintain independent contact, and file its own reports with the center, instead of being under the direct leadership and guidance of the New York district. All this violates Lenin's "Letter to a Comrade." Although our district sent in a report in early March summing up this plan as a deviation from the Iskra plan, we have to this day received no evaluation of our report. Now, instead of properly concentrating the views and experiences of the districts, the PSC is continuing its march away from the burning task of winning the advanced workers to communism. And instead of intensifying and rectifying our work in implementing the Iskra plan, we get calls for national campaigns on the auto contract, for "hospital work," and to "go to the masses." Leading and summing up the work of winning the advanced has over a period of time become of little importance to the PSC; worshipping the mass movement and every strike has now captured their attention. Howard's plan is a continuation in downplaying our work to win the advanced workers and build factory nuclei.

7) What methods should we use to seek unity with other forces, like August Twenty-Ninth Movement, I Wor Kuen, etc.? Certainly, where it is possible, we should initiate or participate in various forms of joint action with these forces. But what Howard leaves out is that the basis of our work with them is the development of our own independent communist policy towards them specifically, an evaluation of the correctness or incorrectness of the ideological and political lines. To aggressively seek unity, we must aggressively overcome the obstacles of opportunism that today stand in the way of unity -- and that means drawing clear lines of demarcation between what is genuine and sham in each of them. Further, in order to strive to forge principled unity with these forces, we must wage open polemics that in a comradely and straightforward way, lay out our criticisms of them. This, of course, was forcefully advocated by Lenin for Iskra.

Since the author and promoters of this proposal have been running The Communist, however, what we have seen is a steady phasing-out of polemics and exposures of

the other forces. We print an article by Proletarian Unity League on the October
 ue without comment, even though the Proletarian Unity League holds that the
 t" is the main danger, and upholds the white-skin privilege theory. We get
 nce on the sharp debates on some burning questions: who are the advanced,
 ds, October League's "new" plan for the party, periods in the communist move-
 , etc. The "revolutionary wing" collapses before our very eyes, yet our editors
 with folded arms, content to let these important events pass unnoticed. We
 d go on and on. But what is clear is that what we are getting already, even
 re this proposal is implemented, is an opportunist class peace and a miserably
ive lagging behind events in the communist movement.

In order to facilitate the work of establishing a U.S. Iskra, we must seek to
 e with those forces already closest to us and to win new forces, especially
 among the advanced workers, to our side. Towards this end, we must aim for
 tionwide conference of delegates to build The Communist.* This conference
 ld elect an editorial board. The paper must strive to become the organ of the
 re Leninist trend. The paper must be used to wage open and comradely polemics
 in the Leninist trend in order to arrive at principled unity. As Lenin said
 is Iskra declaration statement:

"...the intellectual unity of Russian Social-Democrats has still
 to be established, and in order to achieve this it is necessary, in
 our opinion, to have an open and thorough discussion of the fundamental
principles and tactical questions raised by the present-day Economists,
 revisionists, and 'critics'... But while discussing all questions from
 our own definite point of view, we shall geve space in our columns to
 polemics between comrades. Open polemics with the sight and hearing of
 all Russian Social-Democrats and class-conscious workers are necessary
 and desirable, in order to explain the profound differences that exist,
 to obtain a comprehensive discussion of disputed questions, and to
 combat the extremes into which not only the representatives of various
 views, but also of various localities or various 'crafts' in the revo-
 lutionary movement inevitably fall."

of course, the paper's main content must still be propaganda, through political
 sures. The paper must clearly distinguish in its pages between which articles
 resent the WC line, and which are from contributors, a practice not followed by
 present editors of The Communist. We must strive to develop and expand our
 work of agents around the paper, as the communists of Lenin's day did. And, as
 of this plan, preparations must be made for a companion theoretical journal,
 as Zarya was to Iskra. In order to fulfill our tasks, including defeating
 rooting out the opportunist line behind Howard's proposal, we need more theoret-
 al work than has already been done, and that can't be done through a newspaper
 ie.

his coincides with the proposals in "Why the Red Dawn?" We always insisted on
 he need for a high level of ideological and political unity at such a conference.
 his should not be confused with our proposal to the Central Committee that
 nother conference of the entire Workers' Congress be convened to deal with the
 wo-line struggle.

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