

PARTY SPIRIT OR CIRCLE SPIRIT ?

Expose RWL/PRRWO's Menshevism on the Organizational Question

THE CORRECTNESS OR INCORRECTNESS OF IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL LINE DECIDES EVERYTHING

The struggle to forge a U.S. anti-revisionist communist party has sharply exposed the opportunist lines on organization: who practices party spirit and who practices circle spirit.

The fundamental criteria we use to determine whether one practices party spirit or circle spirit in our party building tasks is Chairman Mao's teaching that "the correctness or incorrectness of the ideological and political line decides everything."

A firm proletarian stand, "serving the interests of the vast majority," dictates that genuine communists and the advanced must actively work to liquidate their present circles, based on unity of ideological and political line to form the great whole - the party of a new type.

Workers Viewpoint Organization (WVO) has consistently practiced this Bolshevik principle and has taken the stand of liquidating itself. This was shown by the plan to merge with the Revolutionary Workers League (RWL) before the split between us occurred.

The present day Oztovists, in order to cover their tracks for their Menshevik line on organization, are now racking their brains, sinking deeper into opportunism, in an attempt to find the "line of demarcation" with the WVO - to show that they never had unity with the WVO in the past. These lines are that party building is the central and only task; the broad stratum of workers are backward; the situation in Angola shows that revolution is the main trend and contention between the two superpowers is a secondary trend; that there is no such Leninist tactic of "supporting the misleaders like a rope supports a hanging man" and that Owusu Sadaukai's participation in the October 27th Rally in Support of Puerto Rico's Independence was "right opportunist," repudiating the former line on his participation; that bourgeois ideology and opportunism is always conscious; and a whole array of opportunist positions which have caused their dive towards the marsh, from the "left".

Unity between WVO and RWL was reached when there were no organization-to-organization ideological and political differences to speak of. Rather, it was RWL's and Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization (PRRWO's) petty bourgeois careerist, Menshevik line on organization that unleashed the present flood of opportunism, quickly washing them into the marsh.

Their opportunism on the organizational question is classical Menshevism. For it was exactly on the organizational question - over paragraph one of the Rules - that the Mensheviks first got their stinking names. Since then, not without good basis, Menshevism has developed further and acquired a broader meaning - now being associated with the general character of renegades, of scabs, of traitors to the working class.

FOOTNOTE:

* Before the split, through a process of struggle between WVO and RWL, line by line, over the questions on 1) building the party on the ideological plane, 2) the international situation, 3) fascization, 4) advanced worker and fusion, 5) trade union question, 6) strategy and tactics, 7) unite to expose, etc., we had achieved unity.

We had historically struggled with PRRWO on these same questions. Their dogmatist tendency had been rampant, but then it was still a tendency and had shown certain signs of moving away from it.

But when the opportunist leadership in PRRWO took the Menshevik organizational line of "every organization stand abreast, with no organization representing an overall relatively correct line, merger is hegemonic," it unleashed the floodgate of opportunism.

The Menshevism of RWL and PRRWO which jumped out on the organizational question has since spread wide, and gone beyond questions in the organizational sphere to political, philosophical, economic, and numerous other spheres - as the development of RWL has clearly shown. As Lenin put it concisely, "it is highly interesting to note that these fundamental characteristics of opportunism in matters of organization (autonomism, aristocratic or intellectual anarchism, tailism, and Girondism) are, mutatis mutandi, (with appropriate modifications), to be observed in all the Social-Democratic parties in the world, wherever there is a division into a revolutionary and an opportunist wing (and where is there not?)" ("One Step Forward, Two Steps Back," LCW, Vol. 7, p. 397)

What is the theoretical justification for this Menshevism? What is their favorite catchword, the hallmark of their opportunism? What's the relation between the October League's (OL) infamous line on party building which promises "democracy for all" but without a program, congress or leading body, and this Menshevism of the "left" opportunists?

Though Martov, the original Menshevik in Russia is dead, Menshevism as an ideological trend in the organizational sphere remains. And unless we understand its content, its class basis, its catchwords, and identify its forms, it will surely repeat and plague the effort to build a genuine communist party. In this spirit, we would also like to dissect and criticize the Marxist Leninist Organizing Committee (MLOC) on their party building strategy, to show how it, too, is nothing but old wine in a new bottle. MLOC's line is nothing but Menshevism through and through, dressed up - cloaked in grandiose formulations of strategy and tactics - appeals to the worst retrograde instincts for equality and democracy, etc., to cover its sham character.

"KEEP IN LINE, DON'T RUN AHEAD;
EVERYBODY STANDS ABREAST!"

To deny the higher ideological and political unity between WVO and RWL, in order to prevent our merger, PRRWO first laid out their notorious thesis that WVO and RWL cannot have a higher basis of unity, not because we objectively didn't, but because "within the revolutionary wing, no one organization has an overall most correct line. Therefore merger would mean stacking up the cards for the Party." According to them, to say that RWL and WVO had overall a higher level of unity is "hegemonic" and merger of two organizations is "against a third organization." The correct approach to build the party according to PRRWO, and later opportunist elements in the RWL leadership, is to prevent the development of the correct line emerging in one or two organizational forms, but instead, individual organizational forms should naturally and gradually wither away, followed by the simultaneous emergence of one organization, as the struggle for the political line of the party develops.

In WV#4, we have shown how PRRWO's sophistries and mutation of line have transformed from a "left" dogmatic tendency to a whole system of anarcho-socialist politics and line.

As Lenin characterized the oztovists:

"We in the Proletary have long been strongly opposing oztovism, and have definitely stated that oztovism - to the extent that it is evolving from a mere mood into a trend, a system of politics - is departing from revolutionary Marxism and breaking completely with the principles of Bolshevism." (LCW, Question of the Day, Vol. 15, p. 356)

He continued:

"But inasmuch as oztovism is being erected into a theory, reduced to a complete system of politics - by a small group imagining itself to be the repre-

What this line denies is 1) the concrete unity between WVO and RWL, and concrete differences on a whole array of ideological and political lines between WVO-RWL and PRRWO at that time, stemming from the historical two-line struggle within what we called the revolutionary theory trend - namely dogmatism vs. Marxism-Leninism; and 2) to say that no one has the overall correct line denies the question of the representative of any line which exists objectively, independent of our will. There are no lines without some individual or organization there to promote and practice it; and 3) theoretically, it reflects a view of only seeing organizational unity as a question of pure form, and doesn't see that once ideological and political unity is achieved, higher organizational form, in turn, serves to promote the higher development of ideological and political line through the concentration of political, ideological and organizational leadership.

RWL/PRRWO'S MENSHEVIK ORGANIZATIONAL LINE: TAILISM, AUTONOMISM, INTELLECTUAL ANARCHISM

Lenin joked about the bankrupt arguments of the Mensheviks on precisely this question. He wrote:

Finally consider the profound wisdom of the new Iskra's 'Practical Worker'. 'Properly understood,' he says, 'the idea of a militant centralist organization uniting and centralizing the revolutionaries' activities [the italics are to make it look more profound] can only materialize naturally if such activities exist [both new and clever!]; organization itself, being a form [mark that!], can only grow simultaneously [the italics are the author's, as throughout this quotation] with the growth of the revolutionary work which is its content.' (No. 57) Does this not remind you very much of the character in the folktale who, on seeing a funeral, cried: 'Many happy returns of the day'? I am sure there is not a practical worker (in the genuine sense of the term) in our Party who does not understand that it is precisely the form of our activities (i.e. our organization) that has long been lagging, and lagging desperately, behind their content, and that only the Simple Simons in the Party could shout to people who are lagging: 'Keep in line; don't run ahead!' (LCW, One Step Forward, Two Steps Back, Vol. 7, pg. 387) (all emphases and parentheses in original)

Comrades, this is precisely the Menshevik line of PRRWO which argues, "keep in line, don't run ahead because no one has the overall correct line." "The organizations in the revolutionary wing must merge simultaneously and naturally with the development of the content."

Lenin mercilessly whipped the Mensheviks on this question:

The philosophy of tailism which flourished three years ago in questions of tactics, is being resurrected today in relation to questions of organization. Take the following argument of the new editors.

sentative of 'true' revolutionism - a relentless ideological war must be launched against it ... the principles which certain oztovists urge in support of their trend - whether they are conscious of it or not - threaten to lead them to anarcho-syndicalism or to just plain anarchism." (IBID, p. 357)

The opportunists in RWL, in collaboration with PRRWO on this Menshevik organizational line, have resorted to a sophist philistine explanation to justify "every organization in the wing is equally correct." This precisely liquidates the historical two-line struggle in the wing between Marxism-Leninism and dogmatism, which collapsed line by line into PRRWO's "left" opportunism.

Pressured by internal struggle for the correct line plus the WVO's hot pursuit of their oztovist line, PRRWO/RWL has degenerated completely into an opportunist trend opposing Bolshevism.

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'The militant Social-Democratic trend in the Party,' says Comrade Alexandrov, 'should be maintained not only by an ideological struggle but by definite forms of organization.' Whereupon the editors edifying remark: 'Not bad, this juxtaposition of ideological struggle and forms of organization. The ideological struggle is a process, whereas the forms of organization are only ... forms [believe it or not, that is what they say - No. 56, Supplement, p. 4, bottom of col. 1.] designed to clothe a fluid and developing content - the developing practical work of the Party.' That is positively in the style of the joke about a cannonball being a cannonball and a bomb a bomb! The ideological struggle is a process, whereas the forms of organization are only forms clothing the content! The point at issue is whether our ideological struggle is to have forms of a higher type to clothe it, the forms of a party organization, binding on all, or the forms of the old disunity and the old circles. We have been dragged back from higher to more primitive forms, and this is being justified on the plea that the ideological struggle is a process whereas forms - are only forms.' (LCW, One Step Forward, Two Steps Back, Vol. 7, p. 386)

This is the Leninist position on party organization and party spirit.

PRRWO/RWL's line that merger between two organizations with higher ideological and political unity means unity against a third organization, is a thoroughly Menshevik line. It disregards ideological and political content, and elevates the organizational question above everything. That line was covered up by the correct understanding that differences between the revolutionary wing and the opportunist wing are absolute, while differences within the revolutionary wing are relative. PRRWO tried to interpret this to mean that differences within the revolutionary wing are insignificant, that "unity is the principal aspect." They interpreted this to mean that differences between right and wrong, differences between dogmatism and Marxism-Leninism are not absolute. To us there are absolute differences, which if not properly identified and struggled out, will lead to a split.

The view that merger of two organizations goes against a third, and is an act of "stacking the cards," is a blatantly petty bourgeois proprietor's viewpoint. As Chairman Mao said, every idea and every viewpoint is stamped with the brand of a definite class. What class does this viewpoint stem from if it views the forward motion and unity of two fraternal organizations as hegemonism? Only a capitalist would view the unity of two capitalist organizations as a threat to them, only a petty proprietor would view this unity as "stacking the cards," - either you win or he wins - rather than a progressive step in the struggle against the bourgeoisie.

BUILD THE PARTY FROM BOTTOM UP: OL'S MENSHEVISM

OL's November "call to the Party," is the epitome of the lowest common denominator approach to party building, the classical epitome of the anti-party circle spirit. With promises of full democracy, no program, no congress, no established leading body, etc., the anti-party circle spirit has been visible for all to see.

OL's opportunist call for the party, instead of being based on a principled Marxist-Leninist line, is reduced to nothing but a "plan" (scheme!) To begin with, these Mensheviks hold on to what Lenin called the "bottom upward" line: "wherever possible and as far as possible, upholds autonomism and 'democracy' to the point of anarchism" (LCW, Vol. 7, p. 394 as revealed in their "unity discussion" and "unity conference."

Secondly, in the absence of principle and line, whatever works is correct and whatever works better is more correct. This is out and out pragmatism. This is the basis, the real content, of the recent "modifications" by the OL of the old "plan." We agree with the OL that the basic features of the plan remain the same, i.e., Menshevism, because the "modifications" do not repudiate the old lines. (The Call, March 1976)

The anti-party circle spirit of the OL is promoted in their line of the "growing unity trend," "the main trend is unity," "desire to unite" etc., without drawing lines of demarcation. A trend, whether Marxist-Leninist

or opportunist, is characterized by certain ideological and political physiognomy. The opportunist OL, by pushing this "unity trend" without going into the ideological and political line, is therefore precisely putting organization as key and promoting "unity" without class content -- devoid of line. Under the outcry of "unity," but standing for unprincipled unity is diametrically opposed to genuine party spirit.

Comrades, doesn't this Menshevism of putting unity above everything else remind you of RWL's one-sidedly putting "daring above everything else" (Palante, June 1976, p. 8) without upholding the ability to differentiate lines (as our Chinese comrades sum up in their Tenth Party Congress)? Yes! Both the right and the "left" opportunists throw out the window the fundamental principle of "the correctness or incorrectness of the ideological and political line decides everything." Hence both uphold organization as key. Once again, these otzovists are Mensheviks-inside-out!

"HEGEMONISM" - THE CATCHWORD OF BOTH THE RIGHT AND 'LEFT' MENSHEVIKS

Another interesting characteristic of this Menshevism on the organizational question is that whether they take a right or "left" form, they all use the same catchword: "hegemonism" in relation to questions of party building. We pointed out in our September 1974 issue of Workers Viewpoint Journal that this term was first raised by none other than the now fully-degenerated Guardian, and that we should have no sham unity with this opposition. It was later picked up and used by the OL in relation to the RU's party building motion. "And so, insofar as the new catchwords of the new Iskra on organization contain any principles at all, there can be no doubt that they are opportunist principles. This conclusion is confirmed both by the whole analysis of our Party Congress, which divided into a revolutionary and an opportunist wing, and by the example of all European Social-Democratic parties, where opportunism in organization finds expression in the same tendencies, in the same accusations, and very often in the same catchwords." ("One Step Forward, Two Steps Back")

In our opinion, there is no such thing as "hegemonism" in relation to party building affairs. There is only the question of the correctness or incorrectness of ideological and political line, and the question of circle spirit or party spirit in the organizational sphere.

Hegemonism versus anti-hegemonism, which according to these opportunists would mean "no one has an overall correct line," is really nothing but tailism and autonomism on the question of organization, and intellectual anarchism in regard to proletarian discipline. Lenin says of these Mensheviks: "Their 'principles' of organization therefore display all the colours of the rainbow. The predominant item consists of innocent passionate declamations against autocracy and bureaucracy, against blind obedience and cogs and wheels -- declamations so innocent that it is still very difficult to discern in them what is really concerned with principle and what is really concerned with co-optation.... Sneering at discipline-autonomism-anarchism -- there you have the ladder which our opportunism in matters of organization now climbs and now descends, skipping from rung to rung and skillfully dodging any definite statement of its principles. Exactly the same stages are displayed by opportunism in matters of programme and tactics: sneering at 'orthodoxy,' narrowness, and immobility - revisionist criticism' and ministerialism - bourgeois democracy." ("One Step Forward, Two Steps Back")

"There is a close psychological connection between this hatred of discipline and that incessant nagging note of injury which is to be detected in all the writings of all opportunists today in general, and of our minority in particular. They are being persecuted, hounded, ejected, besieged, and bullied. There is far more psychological and political truth in these catchwords than was probably suspected even by the author of the pleasant and witty joke about bullies and bullied." Then Lenin raised some examples of these Mensheviks.

"There are the Bundists and the Rabocheye Dyelo-ists," he said, "whom we offended so badly that they withdrew from the Congress; there are the Yuzhny Rabochey-ists, who were mortally offended by the slaughter of organizations in general and of their own in particular...." ("One Step Forward, Two Steps Back")

In the communist movement today, the term "circle spirit" is generally viewed as an autonomous line practiced by a small organization. And larger

organizational "chauvinism" is referred to as "hegemonism". This is incorrect. Circle spirit refers to a line which builds upon narrow autonomous organizational interests and not the interests of party building. It is not something intrinsic in smaller collectives. Likewise, party spirit is not necessarily practiced by larger organizations. Before the party is built, large organizational chauvinism, in fact, is a particular form of circle spirit, as distinct from party spirit. So in our opinion, OL's line that bases "success" and "ideological leap" of an organization on whether or not an organization has increased in numbers, "whether it has grown," is an appeal to anti-party, retrograde "circle spirit." They use organization as key -- not ideological and political line -- to build their party.

IDEOLOGICAL AND CLASS BASIS; PROLETARIAT VS PETTY BOURGEOISIE ON ORGANIZATION

Is there any wonder then, that our Mensheviks - inside-out, the present day otzovists, scream "hegemonism," as all petty bourgeois opportunists do? Is it any wonder that a dying class fearful of being swallowed by these Monopolies, yell "equality," "fairness," the loudest, yet play the dirtiest? Aren't the OL Mensheviks and the PRRWO/RWL Mensheviks inside-out, made of the same stuff, except covered up with a more hypocritical, even more pretentious "proletarian" facade? Yes they are!!

Lenin also pointed out that "...defenses of autonomism as against centralism..." is "inseparably connected with Girondism and aristocratic anarchism..."

Comrades, this is the characteristic of Menshevism.

This characteristic is very pronounced in Palante, the sham Bolshevik and the IWK Journal. These opportunist "theoreticians" all have the most vulgar habit of taking line struggles out of the concrete context of time, place, condition and the main danger.

They have inherited their best tradition from Martov and Axelrod, practice revisionism and make a career out of lumping together particular statements and particular developmental factors with zeal.

Circle spirit is the vulgar habit, mode of thinking and mood of Mensheviks and Mensheviks inside-out otzovists. This is the pattern of behavior of the Mensheviks and Mensheviks inside-out otzovists, of worshipping organizational tailism elevated to the level of principle, of intellectual anarchism that stems from the mode of life of the unstable petty bourgeois class - unstable because they are threatened from both sides.

The petty bourgeoisie view discipline and organization and division of labor as "cogs and wheels" of a large "impersonal" machinery. They are suspicious of discipline as a form of slavery and "servile subordination" and resent political centralization, thinking it will "turn(ing) me into a political corpse". They view this as something that deprives them of their "distinctiveness of personality" and the necessary "spontaneity", as something that kills their "creativity and imagination."

The proletariat, on the other hand, is schooled in 'factory life', spirit of cooperation and mutual trust and comradeship. It views recognition of and action to change necessity as freedom. It embraces collectivism and cooperation with pleasure and delight. It is inspired with the lofty goal of communism, stemming from the proletarian class stand which works for the interests of the vast majority, dares to go against Menshevik and otzovist tides. For the same reason it despises circle spirit and all the philistine arguments and systems of views that justify and lead towards it.

Struggle over the party spirit or the circle spirit is a class struggle; the one class against another; the proletariat versus the petty bourgeoisie. Either one prevails or the other prevails. There is no middle road. The various lines in the communist movement are representative lines of different classes and class views.

Comrades, it is for this reason the struggle for party spirit, for the party and struggle over the "slaughter of organizations has to be terribly fierce."

As Lenin put it "The fresh breeze (of party spirit) proved too fresh as yet for people used to musty philistinism. The furious gale raised all the mud from the bottom of our Party stream. And this is a good thing, an excellent thing indeed. Only through tit for tat, vigorous struggle, and through the sorting out process, can the party foundation be laid.

Comrades,

"In its struggle for power the proletariat has no

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other weapon but organisation. Disunited by the rule of anarchic competition in the bourgeois world, ground down by forced labour for capital, constantly thrust back to the 'lower depths' of utter destitution, savagery, and degeneration, the proletariat can, and inevitably will, become an invincible force only through its ideological unification on the principles of Marxism being reinforced by the material unity of organisation, which welds millions of toilers into an army of the working class. Neither the senile rule of the Russian autocracy nor the senescent rule of international capital will be able to withstand this army. It will more and more firmly close its ranks, in spite of all zigzags and backward steps, in spite of the opportunist phrase-mongering of the Girondists of present-day Social-Democracy, in spite of the self-satisfied exaltation of the retrograde circle spirit, and in spite of the tinsel and fuss of intellectual anarchism. ("One Step Forward, Two Steps Back," LCW, Vol. 7, p. 412-413)

PARTY SPIRIT VS CIRCLE SPIRIT ON POLEMICS

A good example of this kind of political opportunism can be seen in the IWK. IWK charges that WVO is guilty of ossifying Marxism and is guilty of scholasticism -- because WVO dares to exaggerate the role of theory against practice and its application to the concrete conditions in the U.S.

Of course, these opportunists also hope that people have had memories. Comrades should recall that the line IWK held during the period 1971 to 1975 was the same practice, practice, practice line of the RU. At that time, throughout our struggle with the RU, all we heard from the IWK quarter was the same kind of slander we got from the RU: "all theory and no practice."

It reminds us of a struggle Lenin had with the Mensheviks over "What Is To Be Done?" The Mensheviks accused Lenin of having "exaggerated" the concept of professional revolutionaries. Lenin replied to these Mensheviks in kind:

"The basic mistake made by those who now criticize What Is To Be Done? is to treat the pamphlet apart from its connection with the concrete historical situation of a definite, and now long past, period in the development of our Party. This mistake was strikingly demonstrated, for instance, by Parvus (not to mention numerous Mensheviks), who, many years after the pamphlet appeared, wrote about its incorrect or exaggerated ideas on the subject of an organisation of professional revolutionaries.

"Today these statements look ridiculous, as if their authors want to dismiss a whole period in the development of our Party, to dismiss gains which, in their time, had to be fought for, but which have long ago been consolidated and have served their purpose.

"To maintain today that Iskra exaggerated (in 1901 and 1902!) the idea of an organisation of professional revolutionaries, is like reproaching the Japanese, after the Russo-Japanese War, for having exaggerated the strength of Russia's armed forces, for having prior to the war exaggerated the need to prepare for fighting these forces. To win victory the Japanese had to marshal all their forces against the probable maximum of Russian forces. Unfortunately, many of those who judge our Party are outsiders, who do not know the subject, who do not realise that today the idea of an organisation of professional revolutionaries has already scored a complete victory. That victory would have been impossible if this idea had not been pushed to the forefront at the time, if we had not 'exaggerated' so as to drive it home to people who were trying to prevent it from being realised.

"... But to pass judgement on that summary without knowing Iskra's struggle against the then dominant trend of Economism, without understanding that struggle, is sheer idle talk.

"... And now, when the fight for this organisation has long been won, when the seed has ripened, and the harvest gathered, people come along and tell us: 'You exaggerated the idea of an organisation of professional revolutionaries!' Is this not ridiculous?" (Lenin, "Preface to the Collection Twelve Years," LCW, Vol. 13)

Is it not ridiculous for IWK to accuse WVO of having

exaggerated theory and its concrete application to the conditions in the U.S., particularly since their positions on various burning questions are nowhere to be found? They held such a line before, which affected not only their line on party building (they didn't even see it as the principal task until the end of 1975!) but hosts of other fundamental questions. Is it not ridiculous, for example, for PRRWO/RWL to accuse WVO of having "exaggerated the question of ideology" especially since they don't even know the difference between Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-tung Thought as the "theoretical basis that guides our thinking" and our thinking itself? This paves fertile ground for opportunism to develop into full-blown revisionism.

The WVO has also made deviations in attempting to understand the relationship between political line and ideological deviations, and has tried to discern opportunism beyond the cruder political aspects of the line. We have also tried to understand and prevent through identifying and grasping, the particular class basis of the communist movement, those ideological deviations and ideological trends which are based on the objective conditions which make these ideological trends inevitable and independent of our will and bound to repeat themselves.

However, the main danger in the U.S. communist movement, as represented by the RCP and the OL, as well as the "left," has been and still is and will continue to be mechanical materialism and pragmatism -- only seeing the cruder political or organizational aspects of deviations and not probe deeper into the finer ideological deviations which are more commonplace and universal in the communist movement (as distinct from the "CP" USA and other consolidated revisionists). It is infinitely better that we tackle this question and make mistakes, than not deal with it at all and continue to be satisfied with the cruder aspects of revisionism. It would be ridiculous to talk about the building of an anti-revisionist party if we didn't understand deeply the question of development of revisionism. But amazingly enough, our "left" opportunists today criticize WVO for "exaggerating the role of ideology." They still believe that bourgeois ideology is always conscious and that the struggle for proletarian ideology is in the main over ("we had still to struggle for proletarian ideology in the last period" !.) ("The Bolshevik")

When Lenin exposed the Mensheviks for charging him with exaggerating the "concept of professional revolutionaries," that was at least when the "battle (on this question) was already won." The present-day otzovists accuse WVO of "exaggerating the role of ideology" when they themselves still don't understand this question of ideological deviations, or the question of how bourgeois ideology accentuates revisionism given the class and historical basis of the present-day communist movement. This is not only ridiculous. This is absurd!!!

These are some examples of "polemics" which we think represent intellectual anarchism. They are the necessary accompanying characteristics of autonomism, and taken together, they define anti-party circle spirit.

Lenin laid out the correct view on polemics and ideological struggle, as distinct from circle squabbling and circle wriggling -- the circle spirit. On genuine principled ideological struggle:

"In each of these stages the circumstances of the struggle and the immediate object of the attack are materially different; each stage is, as it were, a separate battle in one general military campaign. Our struggle cannot be understood at all unless the concrete circumstances of each battle are studied.

"... But the great Hegelian dialectics which Marxism made its own, having first turned it right side up, must never be confused with the vulgar trick of justifying the zigzags of politicians who swing over from the revolutionary to the opportunist wing of the Party, with the vulgar habit of lumping together particular statements, and particular developmental factors, belonging to different stages of a single process. Genuine dialectics does not justify the errors of individuals, but studies the inevitable turns, proving that they were inevitable by a detailed study of the process of development in all its concreteness. One of the basic principles of dialectics is that there is no such thing as abstract truth, truth is always concrete...." (One Step Forward, Two Steps Back, LCW, Vol. 7, p. 409)

This in our view demarcates the methodology of circle spirit from the methodology in ideological struggle of genuine party spirit.

There is yet another impostor of Marxism-Leninism who tries to hide under the signboard of uniting Marxist-Leninists around ideological and theoretical tasks -- the Marxist-Leninist Organizing Committee (MLOC). But once you scratch their thin surface, you hit Menshevism through and through, with all of their so-called strategy to unite Marxist-Leninists actually being nothing but the same appeal for "organizational equality", the same appeal to the same petty bourgeois outlook.

MLOC sees the party building strategy as identical with military strategy -- with the method of warfare. MLOC sees that opportunism within the communist movement must be fought by concentrating a superior force on local and national levels, then working in a quiet, secretive manner, until such time as a maximum force can be assembled. This strategy has to be carried out by "not arousing the watchdogs at the gate before we're inside!"

Comrades, MLOC's approach is a sham Marxist approach. The strategy to unite Marxist-Leninists, to fight opportunism within the communist movement, is an ideological war. It cannot be compared to a military war.

MLOC's approach belittles polemics, and they essentially view polemics the same way as the RCP and OL. Namely, polemics are a bad thing. They deny that the principal danger in the U.S. communist movement up to this point, as represented and promoted by the RCP and OL's line, has been concealment of opportunism and primitiveness because of lack of principled open polemics.

As Lenin said in the "Draft Declaration of the Editorial Board of Iskra,"

"Open polemics, conducted in full view of all Russian Social-Democrats and class conscious workers, are necessary and desirable in order to clarify the depth of existing differences, in order to afford discussion of disputed questions from all angles, in order to combat the extremes into which representatives of various views, various localities, or various 'specialties' of the revolutionary movement inevitably fall. Indeed, we regard one of the drawbacks of the present-day movement to be the absence of open polemics between avowedly differing views, the effort to conceal differences from fundamental questions."

Certainly MLOC's line of taking the opportunists' by surprise, "of not arousing the watchdogs at the gate before we're inside," as MLOC claims, is a far cry from Lenin's line of "open polemics, conducted in full view of all Russian Social-Democrats and class conscious workers". Certainly Lenin's view on open polemics "to clarify the depth of existing differences, in order to afford discussion of disputed questions from all angles" is a far cry from MLOC's military strategy of concentrating superior forces to destroy the enemy one by one and by surprise.

MLOC fears struggle and hard knocks; "Leninists" do not! Lenin in a letter to Apollinaria Yakubova commented:

"How to draw the line between the sound and useful tendency and the harmful one? ... And would it not be ridiculous to fear examination of the question in print since it has already been discussed for a long time in letters and debates. Why should debates at meetings and writing letters be considered permissible and elucidation of controversial issues in the press a 'most harmful thing capable only (??) of amusing our enemies'? This I cannot understand. Only polemics in the press can precisely establish the dividing line I am referring to, for some people are often bound to go to extremes. Of course struggle in the press will cause more ill feeling and give us a good many hard knocks, but we are not so thin-skinned as to fear knocks! To wish for struggle without knocks, differences without struggle, would be the height of naivete, and if the struggle is waged openly (original emphasis) it will be a hundred times better than foreign and Russian 'Gubarevism' and will lead, I repeat, a hundred times faster to lasting unity. (Oct. 26, 1900, Vol. 43, p. 48)

MARXIST-LENINISTS UNITE!
IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL STRUGGLE OR
MILITARY CAMPAIGN

What's the fundamental fallacy in MLOC's line here, in mixing up ideological struggle and military

PARTY SPIRIT OR CIRCLE SPIRIT? (continued from p. 17)

struggle? It is that it does not submit itself to the vigorous process of principled polemics, of taking the best arguments of the other side and aiming for principled resolution to push the communist movement forward? They view polemics as inherently evil and sectarian, as the last thing to do until "every possible effort" is made so that "differences become matters of public accord." (Unite, Vol. 2, #2) This is the same as what OL historically does and is diametrically opposed to our view on principled, open polemics as we laid out in WV #3:

"Under the discipline of constant and vigorous practice and struggle -- and under the higher form of democracy and centralized guidance -- the process of struggle, formulation, practice and reformulation, all based on Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-tung Thought, can bring about the speedier affirmation of the correct aspects of the line and rejection of the incorrect aspects along with the basis for deviations. And with a similar process going on all around the country under different particular conditions and among different sectors of the population -- all based on the guidance of the universal principles of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-tung Thought -- and open, principled and vigorous polemics in a healthy atmosphere between all these different individuals and organizations (grouping and regrouping as a result of struggle) we can best develop the lines and programme and draw lines of demarcation.

"Polemics are for struggle for a correct line. If the line or an aspect of the line is wrong, then it should be acknowledged. This will help the speedy resolution of line struggle and push the movement to a higher level.

"The power of the theory of Marxism and polemics in the communist movement lies with their criticalness, their combative quality. Polemics based on MLMtT forces out to the light of day all primitiveness and opportunism. It serves the proletariat by pressuring the movement, by ruthlessly exposing all deviations, by analyzing its class content and vacillations, and by steering the movement back to a proper path. Theory and polemics should be used to push the movement forward. They should not be used as decoration or to justify incorrect lines." (pp. 31-32)

First of all, opportunism in the communist movement, though more dangerous than the imperialists and other overt enemies, is a problem of a different character. It can be exposed and prevented, provided it is disclosed and identified in time and not allowed to develop and consolidate into full-blown revisionism. Ideological struggle must be waged on two fronts, while the military battle should, as a rule, be waged only on one front at a time.

While there can only be one correct Marxist-Leninist position on any one point, opportunism can take a variety of shades and forms, both right and "left." In ideological struggle, one trend can easily cover another. If we don't "fight on two fronts," we will fall into letting one trend covering and feeding the other. This has historically been summed up by Lenin in building the Bolshevik party as well as by the Chinese comrades in the history of line struggles in the Chinese Communist Party. The same law of dialectics applies here.

For example, historically the right opportunist OL first hid behind the RU's deviations, and now the "left" opportunist PRRWO and RWL hide behind OL's right opportunism and WVO's right deviations. For that reason, ideological struggle must be waged on two fronts. As Lenin put it in his "Notes of a Publicist," (chapter on "The Fight on Two Fronts" and the Overcoming of Deviations):

"Nothing at the plenum aroused more furious -- and often comical -- indignation than the idea of a 'fight on two fronts'. The very mention of this infuriated both the Vperyodists and the Mensheviks. This indignation can be fully explained on historical grounds, for the Bolsheviks have in fact from August 1908 to January 1910 waged a struggle on two fronts, i.e., a struggle against the liquidators and against the otzovists. This indignation was comical because those who waxed angry at the Bolsheviks were thereby only proving their own guilt, showing that they were still very touchy about condemnation of liquidationism and otzovism. A guilty conscience is never at ease." (LCW, V. 16)

This is a far cry from MLOC's "destroy the enemy one by one!!! This difference in principle on the character of the struggle perhaps is best illustrated

by MLOC's conduct: they refused to struggle against OL's opportunism until the beginning of 1976. Meanwhile they have defended and called OL a genuine and honest Marxist - Leninist organization, after their right opportunism had been as full-blown as any right opportunism in the communist movement can get. This was done, of course, in the name of the RCP's being the main danger. Meanwhile MLOC has fed and aided the cancerous growth of OL and retarded the drawing of a principled line of demarcation on party building. This is in fact a sectarian line which has helped to conceal its opportunism.

Chairman Mao has taught us in party affairs to practice Marxism and not revisionism, unite and don't split, be open and aboveboard and don't intrigue and conspire. MLOC's line on the strategy of uniting Marxist-Leninists and fighting opportunism, of sneaking in before the watchdog notices, and destroying the enemy one by one, and by surprise, is precisely to practice revisionism and not Marxism, to split and not unite, to intrigue and conspire and not be aboveboard. The fundamental question they conveniently "skip" is the question of drawing the line of demarcation.

WHO IS TRYING TO DESTROY WHOM ONE BY ONE?

When MLOC raised the slogan of concentrating superior forces, they conveniently skipped the question of who are those forces that can be united with to constitute their "superior force". And that's where their opportunism pours in. The question is, how and what is the basis of unity of their "superior force." And that's where their "unity" and "all standing abreast" line comes in. This is evident and explicit in their Unite (Vol. 2, #2) "Regardless of size, previous achievement and past records, Marxist-Leninists sit down together as equals. No one waves a baton over the others. Without strict equality among ML, genuine unity can't be achieved." (emphasis ours)

But "previous achievements" and "past records" are matters of line which must be accountable to and are the basis to guide relations among Marxist-Leninists. "Strict equality" regardless of line is the same Menshevik line as OL's and RWL/PRRWO's "all organizations stand abreast." They even went so far as to say "It is completely incorrect to break or stop organizational relationship..." This again sounds fair and in the spirit of unity, but actually portrays the worst kind of philistinism.

What was Lenin's line towards opportunists, once they are demarcated? Did he say don't break organizational relations with them? No, he never did. Remember his struggle with the centrist Plekhanov? Remember how Plekhanov wanted to invite the opportunists onto the editorial board to "kill them with kindness" and change them through "atmosphere"? The one that was "killed" and "surprised" was non other than Plekhanov himself, who degenerated from a good Marxist into a "tactical revisionist" as Lenin called it, to a full-blown revisionist. The notorious political broker and renegade Trotsky preached the same stuff, which Lenin exposed:

"One view on unity may place in the forefront the 'reconciliation' of 'given persons, groups and institutions.' The identity of their views on Party work, on the policy of that work, is a secondary matter. One should keep silent about differences of opinion and not elucidate their causes, their significance, their objective conditions. The chief thing is to 'reconcile' persons and groups. If they do not agree on carrying out a common policy, that policy must be interpreted in such a way as to be acceptable to all. Live and let live. This is philistine 'conciliation,' which inevitably leads to sectarian diplomacy. To 'stop up' the sources of disagreement, to keep silent about them, to 'adjust' 'conflicts' at all costs, to neutralize the conflicting trends -- it is this that the main attention of such 'conciliation' is directed." (Lenin, "Notes of a Publicist," LCW, Vol. 16, p. 212)

In practice, MLOC carries out "sectarian diplomacy" under the policy of "one to one organizational relationships in a secretive manner."

Following MLOC's line of fighting opportunism through surprise, the one that will be surprised will be the genuine communists and not the opportunists. The ones who will be "destroyed one by one" will not be the opportunists but the genuine Marxist-Leninists!

CONCLUSION: PARTY SPIRIT IS THE CONCENTRATED EXPRESSION OF CLASS CHARACTER!

Comrades, we have attempted to show first that the arguments of the "left" opportunist PRRWO/RWL that "no one has an overall most correct line," that "forms can only grow simultaneously and naturally with the content," and "don't run ahead" are classical Menshevism and are questions which the Mensheviks got their rotten name from.

We have shown how this seeming appeal to "equality" and "fairness" on organizational questions has the same form and same content as the OL Mensheviks' promise of "full democracy" for all, of build the party from the bottom up rather than from the top down, and of party spirit defined as an organization grows from small to large.

We have shown how both the "left" and the right historically use the same notorious catchword hegemonism in discussing questions of party affairs, and raise the organizational question in order to obscure the ideological and political content of the line struggles involved.

They all publically parade a sense of nagging and injury, of how others want to swallow them up. It really conceals their greatest longing for autonomism.

We have shown the Leninist view that autonomism is inseparably linked with anarchist-intellectualism. And the characteristics of intellectual anarchism are unprincipled polemics out of context of the main danger, time, place and conditions, and the concrete circumstances of the struggle. These opportunists have the vulgar habit of bourgeois politicians to lump particular statements and particular development factors together to play with them to build their "case."

That autonomism and tailism taken together with anarchist-intellectualism as a whole, is circle spirit. Circle spirit can be held by larger national organizations as well. This depends on whether they believe that the correctness or incorrectness of the ideological and political line decides everything.

Anti-party, circle spirit takes on a new variant form today as represented by the MLOC, who equates military campaigns with ideological struggle against opportunism to draw lines of demarcation to unite Marxist-Leninists. This line of concentrating superior forces requires unprincipled unity, requires that "all stand abreast" without consideration to line. The idea of destroying the enemy one by one, by surprise, also negates the Marxist-Leninist teaching that one trend covers another and that ideological struggle must be waged on two fronts.

Genuine communists do not need to surprise opportunists; but opportunists can surely surprise genuine forces. Therefore, when this line is applied, it can only force one to practice revisionism and not Marxism, to split and not unite, to intrigue, conspire and not be open and aboveboard. This is precisely circle spirit defined.

Comrades, the only correct approach is mutual discussion combined with open polemics which discloses all that's opportunist and forces primitiveness out into the light of day. Lenin said that "Tailism on questions of organization is a natural and inevitable product of the mentality of the anarchistic individualist when he starts to elevate his anarchistic deviations (which at the outset may have been accidental) to a system of views, to special differences of principle."

"In the view of Marxist-Leninists, there is no such thing as a non-class or supra-class political party. All political parties have a class character. Party spirit is the concentrated expression of class character." ("A Proposal Concerning the General Line of the International Communist Movement", p. 42). ●