

THE FORMATION OF TR SUPPORT GROUPS

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In recent articles in "Theoretical Review", Paul Costello¹ and Scott Robinson² have examined the past ten years of party-building within the communist movement in the United States, and have shown how its failure to break with the degenerate form of Marxism which progressively took hold in the Soviet Union after the death of Lenin has led to its inability to organize a revolutionary movement capable of leading the proletariat in the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of socialism. In particular, Robinson has pointed out the necessity, in order to lay the basis for developing a genuine communist party, of going beyond the organized anti-dogmatist, anti-revisionist forces and reaching the broader forces that constitute the present, and potential, party-building movement. It is the purpose of the present article to put forward an organizational plan appropriate to the embryonic stage of party-building in which we find ourselves.

THE PRESENT SITUATION

The "Marxism-Leninism" which developed in the Soviet Union from the middle of the 1920's on was progressively infected with bourgeois ideology. The worker-peasant alliance, regarded by Lenin as being essential to the development of Soviet society towards socialism, was discarded in favor of forced collectivization of agriculture, and in place of reliance on the masses came reliance on a coercive administrative apparatus increasingly dominated by a nascent bourgeoisie. "Democratic centralism" became bureaucratic centralism, and "theory" was reduced to justifying decisions already taken on a pragmatic basis. The 1956 seizure of political power in the Soviet Union by the new bourgeoisie was but the culmination of three decades of revisionist degeneration, during which Marxism-Leninism was robbed of its ability to transform the world in the interest of the proletariat.

The international communist movement has only recently begun to understand its degeneration, in its theory and its practice, since the time of Lenin. In China, Mao Tsetung struggled against the dominant revisionist ideology and practice; under his leadership, the Chinese masses carried out collectivization of agriculture within a worker-peasant alliance, and fought against bureaucratic centralism and the emerging bourgeoisie during the Cultural Revolution. (And this is why Enver Hoxha, the leader of the country most truly following the "socialism" of Stalin, so vehemently attacks Mao.) The struggle of the Chinese communists against revisionism, and their practical accomplishments, have led some Marxist-Leninists in the

portions of imperialist countries to critically examine and discard the revisionist heritage they had automatically accepted. In particular, Charles Bettelheim in France has been carrying out fundamental analysis³ of the development of the Soviet Union since the Bolshevik Revolution, which finally enables us to understand how revisionism has supplanted Marxism-Leninism both in the U.S.S.R. and throughout the communist movement internationally. In the United States, "Theoretical Review" has played the leading role in this reexamination process.

But, as pointed out in Costello and Robinson's articles, Marxist-Leninists in the United States in the main still uncritically accept the revisionist heritage. The "rectificationists" of the National Network of Marxist-Leninist Clubs (NNMLC) have taken an important step forward in recognizing the primacy of developing correct theory in the present conjuncture, but they take as their starting point the Communist Party U.S.A. before 1956⁴, which had long been permeated with revisionism. The majority "fusionist" forces of the Organizing Committee for an Ideological Center (OCIC) accept the presently-held "principles of scientific socialism" as the basis for developing, in the context of the conditions in the U.S., a "worker's communism" which will "bring about the most rapid possible union of socialism with the advanced workers"⁵. Neither the rectificationists nor the fusionists have grasped the need to critically examine these "principles of scientific socialism" which have become so infected with bourgeois ideology.

The organizations of the new communist movement of the early 1970's, lacking correct Marxist-Leninist theory and incapable of reconstructing it, have degenerated into dogmatist sects. Many have accepted the outright class-collaboration of the Chinese revisionists, or have jumped onto the Hoxha bandwagon "in defense of Marxism-Leninism". Because of their proletarian class stands, however, two of these organizations should not be dismissed out-of-hand, but rather should be struggled with if possible: the Communist Labor Party (CLP), which, although it uncritically accepts the Stalin tradition, has taken a serious attitude toward theoretical struggle and cadre development⁶; and the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), which has vigorously attempted to defend Mao's contributions to Marxism-Leninism (albeit by uncritically supporting the "Gang of Four").

In this situation, "Theoretical Review" (TR) began publishing in Fall 1977, with an outlook which has increasingly targetted the degeneration of Marxism-Leninism which has permeated the international communist movement for many decades. Its circulation has grown rapidly, to 700-800 after two years, but it is still being published on a shoestring basis by only a handful of people, and only bimonthly.

TR has been playing a vital role in developing the theoretical bases for building a genuine communist party in the United States, and we must ask how Marxist-Leninists across the U.S. can systematically contribute to this process in collaboration with TR. What is proposed in this article is the establishment of a network of TR support groups, leading eventually to the formation of a national organization capable of intervening systematically in the struggle to build a communist party on the basis of Marxism-Leninism.

TR SUPPORT GROUPS

A national communist organization would provide the most effective means for intervening in the party-building process, but it cannot be created out of nothing. Along with the theoretical paucity of our movement, which makes impossible the development of the political basis of unity required for a Marxist-Leninist organization viable on a national scale, is the attendant low level of cadre development, which means that such an organization, even if created under an advanced political basis of unity, would remain but a shell. At this time what is needed is the formation, on a local scale, of Marxist-Leninist collectives able to contribute movement-wide to the development of Marxist-Leninist theory, and able to systematically develop the theoretical level of their own members. The focus of their work would be writing articles for TR, and they would accordingly function as a network of TR Support Groups (TRSG's).

Specifically, the TRSG's would organize themselves in order to carry out the following tasks:

- (1) To help rescue Marxism-Leninism from its revisionist degeneration since the death of Lenin, by writing articles on particular questions for TR.
- (2) To enter into theoretical struggle with Marxist-Leninist organizations such as the NNMLC, OCIC, CLP, and RCP, as well as with independent Marxist-Leninists, in order to refine and to propagate the attack on revisionism. (For example, the CLP has recently published in their theoretical journal a criticism of Bettelheim's work from a philosophical standpoint, and they have agreed to publish a reply from the present author which will both address their criticisms and bring out the political points being advanced by Bettelheim.)
- (3) To support TR in other ways, such as with raising financial contributions and with distribution of the journal.
- (4) To develop their own members theoretically, through systematic study of basic Marxist-Leninist writings as well as through struggle over analyses currently

circulating within the movement. This would be in addition to theoretical study associated with writing articles for TR.

We list a number of important theoretical questions which ought to be analyzed by the TRSG's and by other Marxist-Leninists. In many cases they can be broken down into three parts: the experience of the international communist movement, the experience of the old U.S. communist movement, and conclusions relevant to the emerging U.S. communist movement.

- (1) Marxist-Leninist organizational principles. The degeneration of democratic centralism into bureaucratic centralism.
- (2) Dialectical materialism. Marxist-Leninist philosophy has never been expressed systematically, but rather appears as a set of observations about social processes. Mao, for example, has rejected outright Engels' Third Law of Dialectics (the "negation of the negation")?
- (3) The national question. In particular, the "Black Nation" thesis of the CPUSA and the CLP.
- (4) The role of communists in trade unions.
- (5) The role of communists in mass movements to combat oppression.
- (6) A class analysis of U.S. society.
- (7) Proletarian internationalism.
- (8) Mao Tsetung's contributions to Marxism-Leninism, in theory and in practice.
- (9) The revisionist transformation of Chinese society.
- (10) The political functioning of Albanian society.
- (11) The restoration of capitalism in the U.S.S.R.

The various TRSG's and TR itself would each be organizationally independent. However, they would ^{give} support to one another as feasible, for the common purpose of developing and propagating throughout the movement correct theory upon which to base the creation of a Marxist-Leninist vanguard party. The TRSG's of course would have the explicit function of supporting TR through writing articles, raising financial contributions, and distributing the journal. TR in turn could play a coordinating role by, for example, placing in contact with each other readers in a particular locality who wanted to start a TRSG.

THE NATIONAL COMMUNIST ORGANIZATION

By developing certain important aspects of Marxist-Leninist theory, and by raising the theoretical level of their own members, the TRSG's will have laid the basis for the formation of a national communist organization (NCO). Furthermore,

the theoretically most advanced leadership will have emerged within the TRSG's, able best to provide primary leadership to the NCO. Along with the possibility of creating the NCO will arise the necessity for the NCO: the NCO will be required in order qualitatively to advance the party-building process.

The NCO will provide systematization, on a national scale, of the development of Marxist-Leninist theory and of the theoretical development of cadre. It will make possible major expansion of the theoretical journal (TR) as well as other forms of intervention in the party-building process. And it will allow for the possibility of concerted mass work, although on a secondary level.

The NCO will be formed after extensive discussion with the network of TRSG's. Presumably it will be created at a national congress called by TR, at which time TR and the TRSG's will liquidate themselves as independent entities.

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