

October 1, 1979

To: MULC Participants

From: AC/PRC

Comrades,

At long last the MULC minutes are complete. In our August 6th letter we outlined the problem and did self-criticism. As a result, on August 18 we received notes and self-criticism from MLC. On August 17th RWC responded with self-criticism and a promise to mail the notes to us the following week. As we were preparing to mail what we had, we received RWC's notes on September 14.

We've already cited the errors the AC/PRC rep made and our failure to be more disciplined and aggressive in getting them out. We also should have held to our deadline of two weeks from the August 6th letter.

People may have varying views as to the importance of these minutes and the necessity for a timely distribution; however, in the estimation of the AC/PRC MULC rep, they verified his understanding of some initial points that have been debated around the National Joint Study (NJS). That is, it is fairly clear that the Bay Area groups that put forward the proposal--A. Green and Ex-MLC-- would coordinate initial efforts. "The groups submitting the proposal will submit a more detailed one in the future. Unities--national joint study on the Mao-Hoxha Question, etc., to be coordinated by a group or groups in Bay Area (no unity on method, content, POU's, etc., yet)" (WCC Notes, Third Day, Second Session). These two sentences taken together would seem to suggest that it was not intended for RWC to take part in the earliest stage of the proposal. We may find that other issues are clarified through a review of these notes.

If a group has differences with the editing of materials they submitted, they should be in touch with us. If groups have differences with what was recorded by others, they should write the respective group. If either group feels that it is a significant difference and worthy of airing with all the groups, they may want to do this by letter.

Just a few comments from the AC/PRC MULC rep: We should have insisted on the more elaborate form of notes produced by some of the groups. This is especially important for those circles not able to attend. While a division of labor is good, in this case it may have been defeating. One group with the responsibility probably would have been better. (Perhaps a Bay Area group person who could have done this alone). We were impressed at the speed at which A. Green got out the notes from the August 25th, 26th meeting. I am sure much of it has to do with Comrade R's discipline, but I'm certain this was helped by the fact that responsibility was ^{not} scattered.

Hopefully some years into the future we will be able to look at these proceedings and find the embryonic stages of our genuine proletarian party.

In Struggle,
AC/PRC

P.S. We've enclosed one copy to cut down on costs. Copies are being sent to CG, Sunrise and WROC. Also, please advise if all necessary security deletions have not been made.

NOTES FROM MULTILATERAL
CONFERENCE (MULC)

SUMMER 1979

INTRODUCTION

These notes represent an unofficial record of some of the proceedings of the Multilateral Conference (MULC). They are a joint effort and have not been approved by the conference as a whole. Each session is recorded in a different style, with some being more extensive than others. The only requirement for notetaking was that votes, resolutions and, whenever possible, sum-ups be recorded. The group responsible for the notes is indicated at the beginning of each session.

Participants

Amilcar Cabral/Paul Robeson Collective--AC/PRC
B.R. Johnson or Some Comrades--SC
Ex-Marxist-Leninist Collective--Ex MLC or XMLC
Ex-Committee for a Proletarian Party--Ex-CPP or XCPP
Kansas City Revolutionary Workers Collective--KCRWC
Marxist-Leninist Collective--MLC
Marxist-Leninist League--MLL
Pacific Collective--PC
Red Dawn Collective--RDC or RD
Revolutionary Workers Collective--RWC
Revolutionary Workers Press--RWP
Wichita Communist Cell--WCC

Compiled by AC/PRC

First Day--Morning Session

Discussion on "type of a party"

Ex-CPP: Some have a wrong focus on "correct party norms." This is idealism and metaphysics. The principal contradiction we must focus on is the relationship between the party and the masses. The concept of "monolithic unity" has been repudiated by historical experience; opportunists such as Khrushchev thrived in the CPSU as dialectical and historical materialism was misused--monolithic unity was put forward as an ahistoric norm.

KCRWC: Ties to the masses is just one aspect of what the party is. We must examine all aspects. We analyzed the 10th Party Congress (CPSU) to understand what principles are universally applicable. (i.e. factions are never permissible). There can be only one guiding line in the party. In the CPC the dictatorship of the proletariat was not consolidated due to the existence of competing lines and separate platforms.

RWC: Tend to agree with Ex-CPP; we must strive for one line but cannot impose an ahistorical norm. Main question is: how does the party arrive at that line? Must be vigorous struggle within the party; history of the CPSU shows that overemphasis on monolithic unity leads to the consolidation of opportunism. Main deviation in our movement has been bureaucratic centralism and the stifling of debate. (i.e. CPML).

PC: Question is much more complicated than this. To understand the question of inner party life we must deal with the contradiction between the need for unity and the need for struggle; it's not true that there are never factions within the party (i.e. history of the CPSU between 1903-1910).

SC: Was the PLA able to nip opportunist lines in the bud before they developed into a faction? Possibly, but we're not sure. In studying the CPSU's degeneration, part of the reason stemmed from the Bolshevisation campaign from 1925 on. Correct for the Comintern to begin this but it generally failed and veered towards bureaucratic centralism. Rich theoretical life of various parties under Stalin was crushed. Deviations represented by the fifth columns were correctly liquidated, but what happened to the legitimate minority lines? Main question: how to view the development of political line.

Ex-MLC: Party must isolate, expose, and defeat enemies of the class. To do this there must always be struggle over ideology; but struggle over programme ends once a majority view is reached. Different platforms cannot exist in the party. In our recent struggle within the MLC ideological struggle was stifled, programme unclear--tendency towards bureaucratic centralism became stronger.

AC/PRC: on monolithic unity - see it as a reflection of the rupture with social-democracy that the CI parties represented one class. Main question is the ability of the party to carry out the majority line after internal struggle and debate. Don't see anything in Mao which approves 2 lines in the party. Struggle over different lines prior to the consolidation of a majority view doesn't necessarily lead to factions (though there obviously were mistakes made in the CPC).

RWP: concept of monolithic unity led to a sterileness of inner party life; were cadre purged because they too a minority view? As long as 2 separate platforms don't exist there must be rigorous struggle within the party.

RD: Democratic-centralism antithetical to factions; do comrades agree that the party grows stronger by purging opportunist elements?

RWC: question is posed in an ahistorical and idealist fashion. Defeat of opportunists in the party is related to their influence on the masses. At certain times it is not possible or appropriate to purge. Part of the job of leadership is to determine when lines of demarcation have been drawn and it is time for a split or a purge. Just because the incorrect line was not defeated in the CPC doesn't mean an attempt to struggle against these deviations was not made.

KCRWC: Struggles in the CPC went beyond the questions of ideology to questions of program (i.e. Teng's speech at the UN in '74). Mao didn't use a dialectical method in developing party unity - declared that the bourgeoisie must necessarily be in the party.

EX-CPP: characteristic of some comrades to focus on inner-party life rather than on the relationship of the party to the masses. We must take up questions of political line. There is a contradiction between social-democratic PB line and position on inner party life -- an indication of mechanical materialism and idealism.

PC: RD's question is an example of how a question gets obscured by its formulation. If we knew immediately ~~of~~ who the opportunists were they should be purged -- but how do we find this out? In the course of struggle the opportunists must be isolated and the majority of the party cadre won to the correct line. Two separate platforms can't exist but differences over partial questions are permissible. Program is the basis for ideological and political unity; tactical differences can exist in the party. Questions of how to run a party are not the same as questions of internal life of the local circles.

AC/PRC: It's a question of priorities -- the closer we come to the formation of a party, the more this is reflected in the forms and methods of the local circles. How do we recognize opportunism? When do we purge? PLA has not given us any real guidance on how to 'nip in the bud' the development of opportunist lines. Everyone agrees for the need of vigorous struggle in the party and opposition to factions.

WCC: must see that our decisions about organizational questions reflects our PB line. We must struggle now to develop our views and practice on correct party norms.

EX-CPP: We have probably had deviations towards social-democracy in our past papers. But others are now falling into 'theoretical recidivism' -- uncritically utilizing Stalin and the CPSU to trash Mao. Historical investigation and summation of the CPSU has been done by the CPC -- must begin our polemic based on the CPC's analysis.

SC: KC/WCC should analyze the PLA's uncritical attitude towards Stalin and the Comintern -- can't look at just the 10th Party Congress to understand questions of inner party life -- we must examine the entire history of the communist movement.

PC: Disagrees with Ex-CPP. We must study the major questions ourselves to determine if we can rely on previous conclusions.

WCC: We recognize the need to study the Comintern, CPSU, and PLA. Felt that what we did study was sufficient to establish what kind of a party we need and did the CPC conform to ML in its organizational norms and practice.

EX-MLC: Ex-CPP said we're not starting with a blank page. But Ex-CPP starts with a position on Mao that is not well documented -- substantial criticisms have been raised.

RWP sum-up: Unity on the need for a party with a single line and program, without factions. Necessity for a lively inner-party life and rigorous ideological struggle. Differences--What is the main aspect of the party? Relationship to the masses or an all-sided analysis of the different aspects of the party. Who are the opportunists? When do we purge them? Do we have a common definition of a single line? Is this equivalent to the program? How does the question of dc affect how we organize ourselves now?

RWC: Must examine how quickly revisionism seized state power in the CPSU, despite the fact that Stalin claims there was 'monolithic unity' within the party. We must critically evaluate the experience of the CPSU and on this basis accept what is positive.

SC: see two tendencies -- one to completely negate Mao - the other to uncritically uphold him, and counterpose Mao and Stalin. Critical of Ex-CPP's position that we just need to 'clarify' our ideological foundations. Need to do a much more thorough investigation of the Chinese Revolution.

EX-CPP: We accept the criticism of a one-sided approach to Stalin; but we see the need to focus on his errors due to many uncritically upholding Stalin now. In the main, Mao's sum-up of Stalin was correct. Stalin particularly didn't understand the relationship between the struggle and unity of opposites -- do comrades have confidence in the analysis already put forward by Mao and the CPC?

KC/RWC: Differ with SC's evaluation of RCP's discussion on Mao/Hoxha; a number of errors which reveal the petty-bourgeois basis of the RCP.

EX-MLC: Disagree that it's 'just a question of confidence' in absence of a scientific analysis. Ex-CPP must demonstrate why Mao was correct. Similar to LPR's call for blindly supporting the CPC after '76.

EX-CPP: question of confidence based on a number of years study of the question of the d of p. The CPC's analysis of the CPSU has been out for years. Why haven't others been studying this question all along?

AC/PRC: Always concerned to hear something 'isn't up for question'. How does our theoretical immaturity affect the development of political line? Maybe Ex-CPP has the basis for drawing such conclusions, but this can't be said for overall communist movement.

MLC: Unity with AC/PRC and Ex-MLC. Ex-CPP putting forward pragmatism. Trying to generalize their direct experience to others here is idealism and voluntarism.

EX-CPP: Two main deviations on Mao: premature flip flops and uncritical acceptance of PLA's views or agnosticism. We support Mao in the same way he supported Stalin. Position that Mao was a revisionist is a line of demarcation.

RD: Most serious deviation is the failure of the circles to carry through ideological struggle to the end. RD never upheld "Mao Tse Tung Thought" yet never went into the whys and wherefores of this position.

RWP: Question of Mao Tse Tung Thought is especially important for the USCM. Many of us took up ML through study of the RD Book rather than through struggle against revisionism. Few have really studied many of the classics. Incumbant upon us to question our ideological foundations without falling into agnosticism.

Writings of the RCP should be rejected because Avakian still wants to stand at the gates of the factories and wave Red Books at the workers.

SC: Want to stress the inadequate theoretical work of the CPUSA; errors of pragmatism. USCM has not broken with this history. Can't sidestep theoretical investigation of US society with premature organizational forms. Need more discussion on the role of the small circles in taking on these theoretical tasks.

WCC: Unity with SC on the CPUSA and the need to break with the pragmatism and disdain for theory which has characterized the USCM. Stress the professionalizing of our work -- particularly specialization and the development of factory nuclei.

EX-MLC: History of the USCM is one of slavishness; even if we unite with a position put forward by another party, this must be based on our own independent analysis and investigation.

RWC: Is there a contradiction between specialization and growth? The theoretical development of cadre amongst the MULC forces is higher than the opportunist forces (i.e. CPML). How do we proletarianize our ranks? What kind of theoretical and organizational skills must cadre have?

MLC (Chair) sum-up: Disunity on the need for 'monolithic unity'; unity on the need for further investigation of Stalin and Mao. Unity: Insufficient to rely on Stalin and the history of the CPSU to explain the events in China. It is premature to draw lines of demarcation on the question of Mao and the CPC. Must recognize the slavishness of the USCM, its pragmatism and disdain for theory -- pressing need to break with this. Must reject the concept of 'it's not up for question' while reaffirming our basic principles. Correct norms of inner-party life don't alone prevent opportunism.

First Day - Afternoon Session

Topic II

- A. International situation as a line of demarcation
- B. Role of proletarian internationalism and alignment with international parties.

A. Line of Demarcation;

XCPP. How an organization situates itself internationally determines who they can unite with. All organizations have been put to the test by the events in China.

KCRWC; There are other lines also that determine the correctness of an organization. WVO and RCP have a past practice and positions that demarcate them from the small circles and prove they are not the leading forces in the United States. The small circles are the main advanced forces, but not the only ones.

PC; XCPP overestimates the role of ideology. In past "all united on MTT", but differences on application. We must immediately develop and unite on a critical analysis of Mao.

RWC; We must combat slavishness.

MLC; Some lines of demarcation have already been drawn. We do not have an open book as to who we will work with now. (eg. proTWT groups, groups that don't recognize the split in the class) PC puts everyone in the M.L. movement and doesn't address current positions. Especially in the formation of a trend it is important to work closest and align ourselves with those people we have the greatest amount of principled unity.

WCC; We face a question of how to be organized. Whether as anarchists or as disciplined communists. Organizations that we see as compromising parties must be struggled with and cadre won away.

MLL; The international situation does not play much of a role in party building in the United States. Following Mao or Hoxha will not determine your line.

RDC; Positions on many of the important questions will determine the trend. Lines drawn around Great Nation Chauvenism, American Exceptionalism, role of privilege etc. To look at only one aspect would be one sided.

XMLC; Roots of the international crisis of Marxism not clear. Fundamentals of the science are under question, similar to the collapse of the 2nd International. Local circles must gain their bearings independently. Can't let others do it for us.

RWP; XMLC has a small circle mentality to think we have to answer all questions ourselves "independently". Ignoring the lessons to be learned from the international C.M. an example of great nation chauvenism.

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B. Role of proletarian internationalism etc..

RWP; There is a lot of Great Nation Chauvanism amongst the U.S. communist movement. Most groups don't even know what is happening next door in Mexico. They have boiled internationalism down to who to follow, the CPC or the PLA. There are other foreign parties who have gone through and are going through many of the same contradictions and struggles we are. We must place ourselves in the international struggle. There is motion to merge all the opportunist forces, and many other groups are vying for the large party franchise. It is essential for us to align ourselves with the correct international trend and become part of the international motion.

PC; Will there be an international party that will help build the party in the United States? Is the M.L. movement in the U.S. the most backwards ?

AC/PRC ; It is very important to be internationalist. The CPSU and the Comintern helped develop parties especially in the United States as part of their international duty. The lack of an international adds to the disorganization in the world c.m.. We must plot our course, study, investigate and align ourselves internationally. We can't do it as a bunch of small circles.

MLL; The international situation doesn't divide, it has nothing to do with demarcation. Marxist Lennist's will become M.L. by studying marxism developing theory and the practice.

RWP; The lack of proletarian internationalism has kept us underdeveloped. Must assign the task now of developing international ties now.

SC; If we are on the bottom of the pole, shouldn't we seek out the ideas, master other languages and put forward organizational plans to help produce theory?

II. Anti-revisionist movement in the United States(excluding the MULC forces)

A. Main Danger in the movement.

WCC; Have always held Right Opportunism as the main danger. Seen through the belittling of theory, bowing to spontaneity, small circle mentality, sectarianism etc. How errors are identified will affect how they are solved.

RDC; There Has never been a break with the CPUSA, on some questions perhaps, but not ideologically or politically on revisionism. An example that most groups have gone among the masses and done trade unionist work or coalition work in an economist manner. Right and left errors can be seen in the tasks organizations set, like going to the masses rather than winning the vanguard. PUL's approach to party building as a united front against pre-mature party building forces are really petit Bourgeois Social Democrats still based on old right ideas; Haywood, Perry. These so called communists hold their ideas from the proletariat and collaborate with Imperialism.

PC; Must evaluate leftism. What form does right take on opposition to leftism? PC used to say that right is the main danger, but have been sent back to the books, ex role of anarchism or anarch syndicalism. Need to know what to win people to. Many parties in the U.S. formed on ultra-left line. Impetuosity, rushing along and extreme sectarianism. PC does not see much rightism in party building lines. Right would be we don't need a party and that is not the dominant line in the m.l. movement(See ICW Vol.6 revolutionary adventurism)

RWC: Unites with PC to a great extent. There has been a lot of better left than right mentality in the movement.

AC/PRC: Not sure which is main danger. Must analyse and identify specific forms. How we identify the main danger determines how to combat the errors.

KC: Main deviation is a right deviation, liquidation of theory etc. At the same time we cannot liquidate the existence of left errors, they are errors also and hold back party building.

MLC: Right opportunism has been the main danger in the international comm. movement. A left tactical line does not determine that the root of the line is left. When we look at the overall political and ideological positions of the main organizations we see in essence rightism.

RWP: Unites with thrust of Mlc. Looking at the overall lack of training of cadre, belittlement of theory, reformism etc., see a world (flooded?) with right opportunism.

SC: Feels they can make a case for right opportunism. The RWC pamphlet shows a good method, political line determines the character of the error. The principle contradiction in the U.S. communist movement as a whole is high organizational level and a low theoretical level.

Partial analysis of recent historic periods in the USCM:

1958-1968-Few broke with the CPUSA

1968-1974-Upsurge of general movements, ML groups formed did mass work primarily. Influence of the CPC dominant, some attention to theory

1974-present-Realization of the main task as party building. Influence of CPC weakening since Mao's death, may be a new period with more emphasis on theory.

— II Who is in the U.S. Marxist-Leninist movement, how to struggle with those we do not see as members of the USCM?

PC: take a similar view to PUL, party building not just capping the motion. Communists are those who uphold the principles of ML (a proletarian led revolutionary party). Analysis of forces in the U.S.:

1. Forces already parties, splits will develop in them. They are beyond reach for now.
2. Forces divided off from us on the international line; LPR, CORES, WC, PUL-do not know much about their motion.
3. Forces to struggle with: National Network of ML Clubs (Guardian split) OCIC, and independents and study groups.

SC: Must bring the different questions to the fore, open up the struggle. Groups should take up a systematic and objective evaluation of who is in the communist movement.

AC/PRC: Honesty and being principled in method are one criteria for struggle. The ability to struggle with other forces and win them over is the potential to form a party.

WCC; Of the opportunist forces there are some still vacillating and still can be won to m.l.. We must struggle with them. The level of the struggle has been too low. We must develop so we can reach people when the time is ripe.

RWC; Need to struggle with those you have a greater chance of unity with.

Sum- Up

Chair; 90% of the groups felt we need some alignment organizationally. Differences on the role of contact, while it was raised for the necessity to make wider contact. It was unanimous that in the international communist movement right opportunism the main danger. Majority believe right opportunism the main danger in the United States. All agreed to look at the source of an error to determine it's political character. Even amongst the organizations we consider right they can make left errors.

CO-Chair; Who are the Marxist Lennists ? We look to those who are honest and uphold M.L.. Honest elements of opportunist trends can be won away, but not the main task.

PC; Areas for further investigation

1. Mao, PLA, CPC
2. International trends
3. Is the question of Mao a question of the fundamentals of M.L.?

PC notes we shouldn't try to take up all questions at once, but as they fit into our tasks.

Topics Discussed:

- a. A general assessment of the forces involved in the MULC;
- b. A presentation by WCC on "theoretical tools" (key link, etc.);
- c. Discussion of MLL's view that it should leave the conference; and
- d. Beginning of discussion on theory and practice and their relationship.

A. General Assessment of MULC Forces

There was quick unity on view put forward by KCRWC that our forces were (are) small, scattered, and have a low theoretical level.

The chair suggested that the question of the level of unity among the MULC forces be reserved for a further point in the discussions, and it was.

It was agreed that this point could be moved off of quickly, and it took very little time to do so.

B. WCC Presentation on "theoretical tools".

WCC has asked for space on the agenda to put forward their view on the "theoretical tools" needed to correctly analyse party-building. We believe it can be summarized as follows:

"Party-building is the main task. Within it, there are several basic of "strategic tasks". They are interconnected and one is key to moving them all forward (the key strategic task).

Within each strategic task, there are tactical tasks. Within the key strategic task is a key tactical task ("key link), which in turn will push everything forward."

There was much discussion about whether WCC's use of such analysis was scientifically accurate, given the past usage of such terms by leading M-L's, and whether it really helped much in clarifying the discussion.

For example, SC pointed out that Lenin used the language of program and tactics, while Stalin said strategy and tactics.

RWP felt that the term "key link" appeared very infrequently in the body of M-L writings, and was not a scientific term.

RWC put forward that the only point of developing such an analysis was to clarify and direct our work, and that it felt that this analysis was not doing it.

... "too complicated"

In the end, there was no unity reached on whether or not WCC's analysis was helpful (they continued to maintain it was, and would clarify our tasks).

What was agreed was that WCC would continue to use such terms through the rest of the discussions, and that they might, through such use, convince people of their utility.

C. MLL Trying to Leave

At this point, MLL announced that they thought it appropriate that they leave the conference. They said that they had questioned from the beginning whether they had enough unity with the participating groups to be present, and that the discussion up to that point indicated that it was really not appropriate for them to be there. They felt their approach to political questions, particularly political theory, was significantly different than that of the other groups.

AC/PR, PC, and RWC all felt that MLL was over-estimating the degree of unity present among the other groups. AC/PR emphasized that MLL had been very quiet during most of the discussions, so that if they really had these differences, they weren't struggling for their line, revealing a "philistine" approach to struggle and the other groups present.

There was general unity that there had been some subjectivity by the other groups towards MLL.

XCPP felt that the MLL had been principled with them in bi-lateral meetings, and that they ought to at least stay through the discussions on theory, as there were things they could say which would help the discussion.

MLC united with MLL's desire to leave, saying that they thought they never should have been invited to begin with, because their views were very far from those of the rest of the participants.

A resolution was passed (with MLC opposed and SC abstaining) urging MLL to stay. They did.

D. Theory v. Practice

It was agreed that the best way to get into the questions of theory, practice and their inter-relationship was to have each group make a presentation on these points, and then later go back into struggle on them. In this session, we did not get through all

the groups' presentations, so there is not much to summarize here by way of unities achieved. The following groups made presentations:

a. MLL: Theory is primary and theoretical unity will lead to the party. Theory should be seen in broad sense, not just confined to the "classics". "Practical" work can be in the theoretical realm: journals, forums and conferences, etc.

Error of MULC is that instead of struggling over particular questions of theory, MULC is attempting to set up organizational apparatus from which theory will come. This is backwards.

b. RDC: Party-building is not an organizational question only, it is ideological, political and organizational. The reason theory is primary is because of the absence from our movement of good theory that can guide our work.

The key theoretical questions to take up are the development of US imperialism, class analysis of US, national question, history of US working class: in other words, the things that go in a party program.

In taking up theoretical work, it is important to involve everyone: contacts, etc. We in the MULC should strive for unity on the theoretical questions that are not well solved today.

Despite above, practice is still important: we might undertake joint work such as worker's circles, work in the national movements, etc. Theory can develop thru such joint work.

c. WCC: Unity with RDC on role of practice.

It's important to emphasize party-building as a conscious process. Views such as those of SC and MLL are wrong, see party-building solely as dev't of theory, this is a spontaneous view of party-building.

The development of a center which can lead the p-building process and focus it is different from the actual development of a party, and the criticism that this "center" is going too fast is wrong.

d. AC/PR: Theory becomes primary by consciously using it to guide all of our work. Agrees that theory includes classics and reading other sources as well.

Thinks it is clear that each little circle can't develop theory on its own: we should work together, prioritize our theoretical tasks and share our work. Class analysis of US key theoretical task.

Practice is very important as verification of theory. Should always be involved in practice to some extent. Fusion low because of objective conditions and role of the opportunists in the working class, in addition ~~to~~ to our errors and low theoretical level.

(NOTE: THE last two presentations were by XMLC and MLC. They developed into a polemic between the groups. At a certain point in the discussion, the MULC voted that it was preferable to spend the remainder of the session in the polemic, rather than continue with ~~xxx~~ other groups presentations. This was done. What follows is an attempt to summarize the differences between the two groups.)

e. XMLC: The MLC always belittled theory and still does. Theory and practice don't exist independently, the contradiction between them is revealed in all tasks.

We must emphasize the development of revolutionary theory because of its lack in the mov't. The main way to test theory is, at this time, through indirect experience (summed up experience of others, classics, etc.).

Majority in MLC continue to be empirical, narrowing theory and its solution to their practical tasks.

f. MLC: Yes the MLC has belittled theory. However, XMLC goes to other extreme of emphasizing only theory and, in practice, dropping all mass work.

Our main practical task is fusion and we will not move it forward if we do theory only. The main task within fusion is winning the advanced.

Practical work is important to maintain contact with the masses, and to verify that we do understand theory.

The discussion regarding the relationship between theory and practice in the present period was summed up, as follows:

Points of Agreement

1. The need for theoretical work is primary. Meeting this need requires a break with our past failures to really deal with it.
2. Theoretical work includes grasping and reaffirming the basics of Marxism-Leninism ^{and} applying the science to study of the concrete conditions in which we must work. Such application includes solving the strategic and other programmatic questions of the proletarian revolution in the U.S. (i.e., developing a leading line for mass work) and developing a clear understanding of the political, economic, and social institutions of U.S. society.
3. Some means should be found to permit a division of labor on theoretical work.
4. Answering theoretical questions includes going beyond what we can learn from our own experiences.
5. Leadership is important in theoretical work, but it is equally important to assist the theoretical development of all members of communist organizations.
6. The level of fusion of communism with the U.S. working-class movement is low. The current social base of the communist movement is fertile soil for the growth of various forms of opportunism. Deepening fusion is a task of the party-building period, not one to be entirely postponed while the unity of existing communists is sought.
7. Practice in this period should fulfill the following functions (the emphasis on each varies among MULC participants): promoting fusion, assisting theoretical work through social investigation, testing political lines, remolding the outlooks of communists, promoting communist unity, assisting those oppressed by capitalism.
8. Practice includes various forms of propaganda work.
9. There are not enough "'Retrograde Trend' advanced workers" in the U.S. today for them to have a visible impact on the direction of either the communist movement or the workers' movement. (We do not seem to have unity on the extent of the influence of a stratum described by other uses of the term advanced.)
10. The absence of a communist working-class vanguard and of necessary theoretical development prevents us from successfully providing broad leadership to mass movements at the present time. This is largely a period of either winning over the class vanguard, or of developing and winning over such a vanguard.

Points of Disagreement

1. Whether the low level of theory significantly hampers the effectiveness of our agitation and propaganda.
2. Priorities for theoretical study and struggle. The sharpest poles of the debate were: (a) focus on those questions being taken up generally in the world communist movement (now, Hoxha's criticisms of Mao) (ex-CPP, ex-MLC, and others); (b) focus on other questions more immediately related to obstacles confronting the U. S. communist movement (party-building; programmatic questions and other aspects of U. S. social development which must be understood for effective agitation/propaganda; later, questions of internal party life)(P.C.). Each side stated that the questions it saw as presently secondary should not be neglected, and could partly be dealt with in the context of properly-focused study on the primary issues.
3. Differences on whether there is a need for party-building theory, and the priority it should receive.
4. Differences on what serious investigation of a question requires. These can only come out clearly on concrete questions. They may have influenced the MLC/ex-MLC struggle, and they were reflected in differences between ex-CPP and others on what is required before taking a firm stand on Hoxha's criticisms of Mao.
5. In internal organizations of communist groups, the degree to which a division of labor and basically full-time theoretical workers are required and permissible.
6. Perspectives on who needs to be armed with the theory that is to be developed, in the immediate period: whether it is basically a matter of each group developing itself now and trying to lead others later, or whether our present theoretical tasks include organized, intensive ideological struggle between groups.
7. The relationship between direct and indirect experience in the acquisition of knowledge. The degree to which theory must be tested against our own experience vs. tested against historical and international experience. Is the latter actually testing theory against theory?
8. Whether the ideological struggle among communists is a form of practice.
9. What definitions of advanced, intermediate, and backward workers are most useful (R.T. definitions, or lower levels that would make the terms more descriptive of U. S. workers).
10. The extent to which relative privilege of workers in an imperialist superpower contributes to the low level of fusion.
11. Whether one of the aims of practice is to win over the advanced (or win over the vanguard), or whether it is to develop and win over a vanguard.
12. In the absence of a communist working-class vanguard, the degree to which we can provide leadership to workers' struggles and to which we can and must do agitational work to fulfill some of the functions of practice.

13. Whether agitation should mainly be aimed at (R.T.) advanced.

The discussion on question of a tendency and drawing lines of demarcation, and on organizing the struggle among communist forces now, was begun at this session. It was not summed up then or later. What follows is the note-taker's outline of the main positions put forward on these questions, at this session.

"Define-a-Tendency" Line

S.C.: Different levels of unity are appropriate for different levels of organization. For one like Iskra & Zarya, where the intent is to provide ideological leadership for the movement as a whole, a strictly defined tendency is needed. Here this means a group with unity on the weaknesses and accomplishments of the anti-revisionist c.m.; the Black national question; ideological and political foundations--Hoxha vs. Mao on dialectics, inner-party life, alliances with the national bourgeoisie, socialist construction; need for a new international, open polemics between parties, the errors of the Comintern; economic development of the U.S. & to some degree, of world imperialism, analysis of classes (& split in w.c.), strategy for world revolution; fundamental t.u. tasks. This is close to a party program, omitting primarily other national questions; the woman question; issues concerning gays; work with the military, youth and aged; cultural work. But it is not a matter of each circle taking up these questions separately. There should be some division of labor (e.g. N.Q. work being done by those in South and Southwest), correspondence, forums, maybe some joint practice. We don't oppose organizing the struggle in some way. We don't have a plan yet, but that is only because we have not gone far in our thinking. Party-building itself should be considered scientifically, but it is not what we should unite on first (ideological and political viewpoint should be the starting point). How could joint theoretical work be carried out when a low level of unity means different points of view would be represented; what kind of theory would result? (But we did have a person with revisionist views on some questions in the group that put out Roots of Revisionism; the contributions outweighed the weaknesses.)

Ex-CPP: We are seeking out those with whom we have the highest level of unity, so we can provide top-down centralist leadership. The original Revolutionary Wing proves that coalitions don't work. Yes, the struggle should be systematized, but how? Some joint work is possible, but it is comparable to united front work.

MLL: Those who disagree with such positions are following the economist line of making organization, not theory, primary. It will lead to the same results as it did with the other "organization is primary" groups (that now consider themselves the party). It is not true that the line of defining a tendency means each group must develop positions independently, then the circles compare their results to see who they can unite with. Rather, we can struggle with each other in the process of developing the lines through, e.g., bilateral correspondence.

Ex-MLC: There should be some joint work, but not at such a high level as the "organize-the-struggle" line holds. The journal Proletarian Cause fell apart after two issues because of lack of unity on the role of the editorial board.

"Organize-the-Struggle" Line

KCRWC: To draw lines of demarcation, we need a thorough and complete struggle over differences. Rather than each circle solving the questions separately--which they cannot do anyway--we should be benefiting from the contributions of each other. S.C.'s line leads to groups continuing to take stands on an incomplete basis, after only weak struggle within the movement (as with the national question and the Three Worlds Theory). So the question is how should we organize the struggle so we can approach the questions in the same way and coordinate the polemic. It is the organized form to do this, not a centralist organization, that we are calling for.

WCC: The other line is tied to a stages theory: theory now, practice later. S.C.'s idea of building a tendency among communists, rather than a trend within the workers' movement, is a theory of cadres. And it amounts to party-building through spontaneity, since there is no plan to make it work. We are not calling for prematurely giving a center leadership responsibilities in developing the line; all we mean by centralized leadership in this context is leadership to guide the ideological struggle, out of which the real center will develop, (though we cannot foresee the intermediate steps to its development.) The looseness of the "define-a-tendency" line in fact abandons the struggle to build unity, to expose opportunist lines, to unite on correct lines, to begin joint practice, which are the steps that will lead to a party.

△ P.C.: Opposition to continuing the struggle over party-building line is defense of spontaneity on party-building, since it means abandoning learning the correct way to build the party. The line of insisting on no cooperation in an organized form until a strictly defined tendency has developed, means in essence groups will separately take up all the questions an s.d.t. must answer, then see who they can match results with (to join in the tendency). If we all apply this, then in a few years we will have a bunch of little strictly defined tendencies trying to provide leadership to the movement. Who will be left to be lead? Who will be capable of reading all our theoretical journals? So far, no one has stated any weaknesses of organizing the struggle over differences, the sharing of practical experiences, etc.--the opposition is all based on the dogmatic argument that there was an s.d.t. when Iskra & Zarya were begun.

In addition to these two polar positions, there was a center or intermediate grouping basically consisting of AC/PRC, RWC, RWP, and R.D. These groups' views were not identical, but they generally made the following points:

There should be some level of organization appropriate to each level of unity existing among communists. We do have some unity among us, unity that means something. But we also have serious differences and should guard against a coalition approach to party-building. Nor can we wish a center into being, or have it declare itself--it will come from a leading line developing and asserting itself. But we ought to be able to take some kind of steps to organize the struggle among ourselves and perhaps begin some division of labor on theoretical work. While S.C. is entitled to put forward their views without having a fully elaborated plan, we are left wondering to what extent they will support organization, cooperation, and a division of labor, since their opposition to the KC/WCC and P.C. proposals includes no clear counter-proposal (apart from mention of forums, polemics and bilateral exchanges without a framework to organize simultaneous study of the same questions, etc.).

* what's the solution IV + RWP?

Question of a tendency and drawing lines of demarcation; Organization, and Concrete Steps

We already had begun discussion on the question of a tendency, lines of demarcation and organization the day before. We picked up discussion around the need for organization with PC asking SC questions around the need for improved organization ("Questions about the 'Strictly Defined Tendency' Position on Where to Begin in Party Building"). On the questions regarding organizing struggle around line, the level of unity needed to do so, SC said they would be dealt with later. SC agreed that coordination of struggle was a problem and that struggle between MULC forces needed to continue, but was still against a journal (joint) until a strictly defined tendency existed.

Here discussion turned from general lines on how to build the party to particular plans, especially KCRWC-WCC's, PC's, and later on a new proposal by ex-MLC. At the beginning groups voiced views on a plan such as KCRWC-WCC's which called for a joint study on party building and burning issues, a journal, and a committee to coordinate and to a degree centralize this process. There was not much discussion about the joint study at first. SC continued to oppose the journal until a "strictly defined tendency" appears. PC and RWC supported the need for a journal. Other groups did not speak to this. All groups criticized the relocation aspect of KCRWC-WCC's committee and some opposed the degree of centralization it represents (RWC, RWP). RDC talked about the need to relocate on the basis of political unity and common experience. PC was against relocation for the leading people it would take away from the local areas and the higher level of unity it would require, but was for a party building committee. KCRWC and WCC continued to struggle for the need to carry out the study, journal, and committee with the proper level of POU's and adequate meetings between groups beforehand. Relocation was viewed as a political question (question of enough unity) not one of resources.

At this point ex-MLC brought out a proposal for national joint study they developed with ex-CPP, RWP, SC the night before. This study is to be on the question of Mao-Hoxha and questions involved around that. Groups would:

1. make it a priority in their work;
2. circulate study guides, etc.;
3. papers would be developed and circulated;
4. based on the papers a conference may be called.

No other particularities could be given at the time. Everyone united* around the general need for joint study on this (except RDC who was uncommitted), with PC, RWC, KCRWC-WCC holding this study should be simultaneous with one on party building. KCRWC-WCC put off the relocation question for the time being. Other groups voiced that a study of party building was secondary at this time and need not be done jointly, multilaterally (some groups remained silent on this question). When questioned about the length of the study, ex-MLC said about six months from the time we agree on the study, method, etc. This was criticized by WCC as unrealistic and voluntaristic. RWP volunteered the priorities of the study:

*For some the unity was conditional on the specifics of the study.

Third Day: First Session

1. the study would start with Mao and Hoxha (CPC and PLA) as the starting point, with questions being
 - a. philosophy (added with WCC's suggestion)
 - b. relations between the party and masses
 - c. nature of the party
 - d. nature of two-line struggle
 - e. composition of the party
 - f. strategy and tactics

There was no final decision on this. The groups submitting the proposal will submit a more detailed one in the future.

Unities: national joint study on the Mao-Hoxha question, etc. to be coordinated by a group or groups in Bay Area (no unity on method, content, POU's, etc. yet); RWC, PC, KCRWC-WCC united on additional study on party building and a journal.

Disunities: all did not unite on need for study on party building and a journal; no unity around the need for a committee, relocation

Third Day: Second Session

A. Green

Continued discussion from previous session about the WCC/KCRWC proposal, and the proposal of ex-CPP, ex-MLC, RWP and Some Comrades, as laid out by ex-MLC; views on overlap areas of the two proposals with differences on the significance of this.

Discussion on national joint work and agreement among groups to view (at least) any proposal for such work which might be initiated.

Presentation and discussion on propaganda and agitation network (proposal laid out by RWP); resulted in a consensus on these four points:

1. groups to take up in their respective collectives the question of sending out their propaganda and agitation as it's developed specifying if it needs development for common use or if it's appropriate only for the use of the issuing collective);
2. take up the question of developing regular (monthly?, bi-monthly?, other?) propaganda and agitation to be circulated among groups;
3. take up the question of groups' commitment to respond to materials received from others;
4. similarly discuss the active circulation and criticism of position papers and polemics as they are developed (taking proper security precautions in their dissemination).

Presentation and discussion on PC proposal.

Third Day: Sum-Up, Criticism and Self-Criticism

Unities & Disunities

RDC: if anything new has developed in people's views as a result of the conference, they should say so.

Notes: people who took notes will type them up and get them to AC/PRC who will put them together and distribute them. Positive motion and errors of WCC and other groups in putting MULC together.

RWC: overall assessment of WCC positive; initiative, organization, diligence. MULC more positive than they thought possible; negative sum-ups editorialized should separate their views from sum-ups-formalism -too concerned about deadlines.

RDC: WCC's initiative very positive; had right to editorialize and set deadlines; critical of SC for continuing struggle over nature of conference after it had been decided. MLC left him stranded during agenda meeting.

KC: planning polemics could have been better if people had followed focus of struggle.

PC: underestimated time necessary to prepare for a conference of this nature.

RWP: self-critical for no Focus of Struggle document - polit. sit. in Denver unable to study these questions collectively. WCC broke with small circle mentality ? had nat. perspective. SC tried to give political leadership eventhough not accepted by WCC. Neg. WCC subjective toward struggle esp. SC.

EX-CPP: no significant criticism of WCC has polit. & ideol. diff. would have organized diff. conf.

AC/PRC: echoes pos crit WCC specifically responsible for us being here put them in touch with other groups; came to process late; self-crit. for not following written material enough.

MLL: WCC good job lots of work.

at 4:15 ... of WCC work ...

SC: crit. of WCC policy for involving new groups, should have just sent POU's at first then if interested & other groups agree, send rest of MULC material.

MLC: unite with SC on new groups; WCC overwhelmingly pos. nat. perspective. RDC didn't have much contact set up; MEC's mistake was didn't set up transportation for RDC; should have challenged MLL's participation; basic agreement with SC's conception of MULC; not able to agree on what questions should be able to be discussed - paralysis.

PC: 1) WCC's conception of PBing line affected their view of the agenda; 2) *some subjectivism & nitpicking both ways WCC & SC raised minor points; 3) finances left too late Sunrise could have been here; 4) 3 minute limit good; 5) stage debate over key questions; 6) strong chair better.

RWC: accept. crit. about group history belittled process pessimism.

EX-MLC: self-crit. about room problem; WCC overall pos. unite with SC criticisms.

AC/PRC: meals Sat. insecure; *... positive*

KC: hosting real good by local groups; pos. crit. for PC for taking init. about \$; strong chair better.

** Agree ... on WCC ... towards SC, ...*

Third Day: Sum-Up, Criticism and Self-Criticism

RDC: phone #s through the mail not secure; should be done in person.

PC: security amateurish.

8 SC: thought they should have struggled for their view of conf. * Accept crit. on subjectivism. *in some of their letters*

MLC: crit. of Ex-CPP; did not have the party spirit.

* Don't accept RD's criticism because it was correct to praise leadership in struggle against WCC's views on the conf.

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Jason's notes

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Concern on MLC correspondence being released by author's permission - "Focus" + "documentation" papers along w these notes may go out to contacts taking proper security precautions.