

A DRAFT CRITICISM OF THE "MASS INTERMEDIATE SOCIALIST ORGANIZATION" PAPER

I. What is Marxism-Leninism?

M-L is the scientific summing up of the experience and practice of the world, of history, of class struggle ("perceptual knowledge") to the higher level of knowledge ("rational knowledge"). M-L does not end with knowledge, it involves applying knowledge in order to "change the world." (See On Practice-Mao).

M-L is the "science of proletarian revolution." It involves strategy and tactics for bringing about that revolution through the leadership of the united front by the working class and it's vanguard party. It involves ensuring it's permanence through the dictatorship of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie and the final abolition of class rule. M-L involves struggling for the "correct line" or policy (one that ^{will} win) on all the important issues facing the revolutionary movement--the National Question, Party Building Question, United Front, the International situation, etc. Imperative throughout all these questions is a stand against revisionism, which is the revising of M-L to the extent that the proletariat is weakened.

Of particular significance in relationship to the MISO paper is to understand the importance of history to M-L as a science. A patient would be wary of a surgeon who insisted that learning from the immediate tonsilectomy was primary to a successful surgical operation. Would you trust a surgeon who, before your operation, told you he had "deferred" gaining an understanding of all the problems of tonsilectomy, planning to deal with each problem only as it became "essential?" No, we would expect the surgeon to have a thorough knowledge of anatomy, physiology etc. We would expect a surgeon to have learned from the theory and practice of past tonsilectomies, to have accumulated the knowledge of the science of surgery, and to act in accordance with that scientific theory. It is not necessary to

start from scratch!!!

Of course, the other side of the dialectic between theory and practice, is practice. As the surgeon engages in practice he gains competence. Also the science of surgery is expanded and tested. If a surgeon never performed an operation, his book knowledge would be useless.

"Revolution is not a tea-party". We are not merely performing a tonsilectomy, we are removing the bourgeoisie, a cancerous class, entrenched in power for 200 years. This calls for iron discipline. It requires organization and M-L theory. Without knowledge of the science of M-L, all the social practice in the world will not bring about proletarian revolution. Without a correct understanding of the science of proletarian revolution, the working class is left disarmed and helpless against the bourgeoisie.

II. The Importance of Theory

Mao: "No political Party can possibly lead a great revolutionary movement to victory unless it possesses revolutionary theory and a knowledge of history and has a profound grasp of the practical movement." (The Role of CCP in National War).

Stalin: "Theory is the experience of the working class movement in all countries taken in its general aspect. Of course, theory becomes purposeless if it is not connected with revolutionary practice, just as practice gropes in the dark if its path is not illumined by revolutionary theory." (Theory, Stalin)

Lenin and Stalin: "Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement."

Revolutionary M-L theory without practice is certainly useless, but practice without M-L is doomed to failure.

In contrast to this position is the MISO paper with its primitive form, emphasis on organization above politics, deferred questions, and incorrect perception of the relationship between theory and practice. MISO recognizes many of the primitive aspects

of the present period, but rather than trying to transform them, raises their primitiveness to a principle, proposing a primitive organization in form and ideological content.

A. Primitive form - Stress on local organization

- 1. MISO - "Given the movement's slender roots in the working class, moving too quickly to create nationwide organizations leads to many errors. Our task is to build strong local organizations that keep in mind the long-range nationwide perspective." (our emphasis).
- 2. If our ties with the working class are weak, we must work to strengthen them - and in so doing combine that task with winning the advanced to M-L, making the creation of a vanguard party that much closer a reality. But we must not belittle the task of party building. We are fighting an enemy who is organized on a national and international level. Certainly we can not allow ourselves the luxury of continuing the narrow local style of work that is characteristic of primitiveness. (See What is to Be Done, pp. 164-166 esp.). For instance, how could an isolated Bay Area group come up with a correct analysis of the strategic importance of the different classes in the U.S., when it would be basing its analysis on experience in an area with very little large-scale industry?

B. Politics must be in command over organization. MISO sees organization as the primary need of the mass movement.

The MISO paper is correct in perceiving that the mass movement needs organization and that "different sectors of the working class" should be united. However, around what line is the working class to be united? There is little in the points of unity that the CPUSA could not agree with. In building this Mass Socialist

Movement, we must ask, "What is 'Socialism'?" Is it the British Labor Party Socialism, Swedish socialism? Is it the socialism of Trotsky? Is it Russian socialism, is it the socialist agenda of the CPUSA? If the revisionist CPUSA had not robbed the working class of revolutionary M-L there would be no need today for a new party or new organization. Yet we are told by the MISO paper that a stand on revisionism is a "deferred" question. A new Communist Party will not only be the organized detachment of the working class, but also the advanced detachment of the working class. (See Stalin on the Party, pp. 103-105)

C. Deferred Questions (See p. 16 of MISO for partial listing)

While the MISO paper affirms the necessity for theory and study; while it wants to build a "socialist mass movement"; nebulous as that may be; and seems to set forward some principles of unity; what is its position on the burning questions of the communist movement which by its own admission are "important?"

Why is their position on deferring these questions incorrect?

1. Answering these questions is imperative if correct practice is to be achieved with the mass movement. How is the working class to be united without a correct line on the National Question, a stand firmly against national chauvinism, a line on M-L, a line on party building, a line on the "united front", a line on revisionism. For example, it is little wonder that blacks are not attracted to MISO with a line on the national question

"deferred."

In failing to grasp the importance of a correct line on these questions in order to lead the mass movement forward, MISO "bows to spontaneity."

There are only 2 kinds of ideology: That which serves the bourgeoisie, bourgeois ideology, and proletarian ideology, the science of Marxism-Leninism. The proletariat and the masses do not come to M-L

"spontaneously", it must be introduced consciously. When MISO "defers questions", it leaves the mass movement in the grip of bourgeois ideology. It "bows to spontaneity" by default in refusing to answer the important questions. (See Lenin on "What is to be Done?") For example

For example, on the woman question, by deferring an analysis of the relationship of sex and class, they are open to bourgeois feminism. On the national question, by deferring an analysis of the relationship of race and class, they open themselves up to bourgeois nationalism as well as a failure to understand the root of "racism", national oppression.

For example, how can communists expect to have correct practice in Boston during the busing crisis without a correct line on the national question? It is imperative to understand the correct M-L position in this situation: What is a nation? What is a national minority? What is the right to self-determination? Do national minorities have the right to self-determination? Why is the class divided? How is the class to be united? By ignoring divisions as RU does, or by actively upholding the right to self-determination and fighting against national chauvinism? These questions must be answered on the basis of science and a clear understanding of them achieved before the working class can move forward. The working class requires M-L and will not come by it spontaneously.

2. By "deferring" questions, MISO avoids the full development of their line, put forward in the statement of principles, for all to struggle with. If these principles are carried to what we think is their logical conclusion many can be shown to be erroneous.

a. The Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

This is a cornerstone of Marxism-Leninism. According to M-L, in class society, the state apparatus always represents the interests of the dominant class. The political overthrow of the bourgeoisie will not usher in a classless society immediately. The bourgeois class will continue to exist, both ideologically and as concrete individuals, and they will try every trick possible to regain power. For this reason the proletariat seizes state power and sets up the "dictatorship of the proletariat" to ensure that the bourgeoisie cannot regain control. According to M-L, every form of state apparatus is a form of dictatorship, one class imposing its will on another. But the proletariat is the first class in history that can be honest about its dictatorship, because its rule represents the interests of the majority. *According to M-L "socialism" is that period of history characterized by the "dictatorship of the proletariat."*

MISO has "deferred" taking a position on the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, a cornerstone of anti-revisionist Marxism-Leninism. By "deferring" this issue they announce their openness to unity with the revisionists.

b. Democratic-Centralism

Democratic Centralism is the organizational form of the "party of a new type" as put forward by Lenin. MISO "defers" the question of democratic centralism, another Marxist-Leninist cornerstone. They are quick to add that the MISO may well be democratic centralist,

although we suspect that if it is, it will be a perverted variety. For instance, one of the authors of the MISO paper put forward that centralism must be based on respect, not authority. This is a distortion of M-L. Why is there centralism as well as democracy? Because we are talking about class war, and iron discipline is needed, an organization that can act as one will. Let us not kid ourselves. People's lives are on the line, and leadership must have authority. Authority based on respect, but definite authority.

Briefly, Democratic Centralism means that decisions are reached after thorough democratic discussion, but are binding on all members of the organization once they are made. There are no factions allowed under democratic-centralism.

c. National Question

Although MISO has no statement of their line on this question, the few hints they give us can be analyzed and we believe they will lead to an incorrect line. In dealing with the oppression of oppressed nations within the U.S., they refer to "racism", "cultural imperialism", and "peoples," but not to "national oppression", "national minority," or "nation." They do not put forward that the root of racism is national oppression by the monopoly ruling class.

d. United Front

MISO's sketchy analysis of classes (deferred question) leads us to an understanding of MISO's line on the United Front, one of the key issues in the revolutionary movement. The closest the MISO paper comes to having a line on the United Front is their

section on "many sectors, many fronts." But *this* strategy seems to advocate an amorphous mass of "all people who work for a living." and advocate 'socialism!' It lumps all people who work (petit-bourgeois and working class, Dr.s and nurses, teachers, skilled workers, unskilled workers, industrial and office workers) into one class with many "sectors." It says nothing about the crucial role that workers in large scale industry must play in leading the mass movement. MISO doesn't really speak to the need for the proletariat's leadership in uniting all classes and oppressed nationalities who can be honestly united against the common enemy.

3. MISO says that it is deferring questions and also that a party can not be built because there isn't enough "practice" to achieve a correct line or leadership. In saying this they:

a. Negate history of the working class and communist movement.

While practice is important in testing and as a basis for theory, there is more than ample practice historically to formulate the foundations of a correct line. To quote Mao in On Practice:

"But one can not have direct experience of everything;...a man's knowledge consists of 2 parts, that which comes from direct experience and that which comes from indirect experience." (pp 8.)

b. Display a primitive, idealist concept of how a party would be created, implying that the development of a correct line is a precondition for trying to build a party rather than one aspect of party building. The CCP did not hesitate to form because it

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knew there would be countless struggles over line in its history. The fact that disagreements over line exist is used to prove that none of the M-L pre-party groups have enough practice -- as if ideological class struggle ends with greater quantity of practice.

MISO fails to see that ideological struggle (the conscious summing up of theory and practice; and struggle over its implications and ramifications) is a form of practice in class struggle and is in fact the key aspect of party building at this stage in history -- when the working class has been robbed of M-L theory by the revisionists in the CPUSA. It is not the CPUSA's organizational form or its "lack of practice" that makes it counter-revolutionary, it is the revisionist political policies the CPUSA upholds and implements, such as abandoning the "dictatorship of the proletariat," in favor of the "dictatorship of the whole people," preaching peaceful transition to socialism ---all deferred questions by MISO.

- c. demonstrates an incorrect perception of the relationship between theory and practice.

What is the correct relationship between theory and practice?

"Theory depends on and in turn serves practice." (On Practice, Mao)
A qualitative leap is made from perceptual to rational knowledge. To say that theory must base itself on practice is not the same thing as saying that theory develops in the "process of practice." The leap from perceptual to rational knowledge does not take place in the "process of practice," but in the "process of cognition," the

conscious summing up of practice to a higher level of knowlege. (on Practice, esp. p. 4)

MISO expects the process of direct social practice spontaneously to develop correct revolutionary theory and leadership. They say leadership will develop "out of practice," in much the same way they originally insisted (since then they have corrected this error) that leadership of MISO would somehow develop mystically "from practice," denying their objective leading role ideologically and practically. MISO is opposed to exerting M-L leadership in the mass movement --- leadership won't have to "declare itself", it just "will be." MISO admits the need for consciously acting on the mass movement in order to win it to "socialism" and "socialist" leadership, but when a more advanced theory is put forward in M-L, somehow it becomes demagogy to try to win the working class over to M-L leadership.

Of course real leadership is not imposed, but how does it come into being?? Understanding the relationship between theory and leadership is key to answering this question. If we understand that the working class will not spontaneously come to socialism or M-L, we can see that neither theory or ideological leadership can develop spontaneously "from practice." The working class must be won over to socialism and to the ideological leadership of M-L. The role of communists is to take the science of M-L to the advanced (open to M-L) elements of the working class. The advanced will build the "mass socialist movement." A worker who has been in a plant for 5, 10, 20 years and who has grasped M-L, will be best able to "build the mass socialist movement" among his or her fellow workers.

III. Mass Organization

Again we want to say that we recognize that mass socialist organizations will exist prior to and after the revolution. They will exist prior to the formation of the new vanguard party and after its formation the party will try to build them. Not everyone is interested in being cadre in a M-L democratic-centralist organization and we recognize that many of the people in this group are attracted to MISO for that reason. We do not see the existence of Mass organizations in themselves to be in contradiction to the building of the new party. The key question we would ask is:

Under what leadership does the mass organization exist? Is it M-L leadership? What are the politics of the organization itself? For example, we do not see the principles of unity laid out by the MISO paper to be M-L. They are "eclectic"---a little of this and a little of that. They are open to revisionism, electoral politics ("state power is rarely (vs. never) won through the ballot box-see pg. 18 of MISO), They are open to bourgeois feminism, bourgeois nationalism and a host of other bourgeois ideologies. For this reason and because of their line of belittling the role of theory, M-L leadership, and the crucial role of the party, we would discourage people from joining this organization.

IV. Why is the Party necessary?

A. Correct theoretical and practical leadership is essential for victory of the working class. Without M-L leadership the working class is left to spontaneous trade-union level, reformist struggles. It is doomed to increasing quantity of spontaneous struggles, but little or no change in the quality or level of struggle. The science of M-L must be introduced consciously to the working class.
(Lenin - What is to be Done?)

The party is the "advanced detachment of the working class," its leadership, and it is the "organized detachment" of the working class. (See Stalin on The Party) The working class and mass movements do not need more spontaneity, they need the conscious, organized leadership of the most advanced and committed. The working class needs a strategy, tactics, goals and clear direction -- it needs M-L leadership. When the MISO paper puts forward "We can not foresee the results of our process" they expose the spontaneous manner in which they really do expect not only MISO, but also a party to develop.

An M-L party is not as MISO says the "collective embodiment of the working class" -- it is the "advanced detachment of the working class" (Stalin) It leads the working class and it is closely bound up with the working class.

Seeing party building as the primary task is not to say that conditions and preparations are right to call a party Congress tomorrow. There isn't ideological clarity on the burning issues facing our still young movement. Building a party involves a protracted struggle over political line and linking M-L to the working class by

locating the advanced workers (open to M-L) and providing correct political leadership. The party must be both advanced and of the working class.

After its formation, even after the revolution it will still be necessary to constantly win the working class and masses over to its leadership. The struggle continues to win the Chinese people over to ^{of the CCP} the leadership, and to achieve a correct line. If the CCP waited until there was a mass socialist movement formed there would have been no Chinese revolution.

B. Arguments against pre-party M-L formations.

What arguments does MISO bring forward against pre-party formations? MISO points to 2 main errors of pre-parties 1) "exaggerated self-conception" as vanguard involving the premature answering of "deferred questions." 2) tight centralism. MISO says this is due to trying to build the party at a time when there is no mass movement for socialism and not enough practice.

To a certain extent these are valid criticisms, although we believe MISO's analysis of their source is incorrect: Some groups have incorrect lines on MISO's deferred questions, some groups have an incorrect line on the role of the objective nature of the vanguard party and its formation. Some are overly centralized. But these errors are not inherent in an MLMTT pre-party group. These errors result from a group's primitiveness or plainly incorrect line. As such they are to be struggled with as dangerous tendencies in the party building movement.

Tremendous strides are being made to overcome the primitiveness of local organizations and individualistic lack of discipline, thousands of people in pre-party formations as well as independent communist forces are making advances through ideological struggle and application of line towards the forging of a correct line and the formation of a new party. At this time, MISO asks that we step back in failure. As alternatives, MISO offers us more primitive organization and a less developed political line.