

B. Wichita Communist Cell (WCC)

WCC developed out of the petty-bourgeois led spontaneous movements of the '60's and '70's in general, and out of Vietnam Veterans Against the War/Winter Soldier Organization (VVAW/WSO) in particular. At one time, in the early stage of its development, when it was VVAW, the organization had a social basis mainly of working class origin. Later, with the decline of the spontaneous movements in the early '70's, VVAW/WSO was captured by the then Revolutionary Union*. The ebb in the spontaneous movement, eclectic nature of VVAW/WSO, and bureaucratic measures of RU, splintered VVAW/WSO and resulted in most of the members leaving, including the present members of WCC. Before and after leaving VVAW/WSO, the present members of WCC were heavily involved in other spontaneous struggles: prison struggles and defense committees; anti-Police repression and anti-Klan struggles; Native American struggle work. After the victory of the national liberation struggles in Indochina, with the spontaneous movement locally at a low ebb in the late summer of 1975, and after having been involved in one spontaneous struggle after another without seeing how any of these efforts were actually leading to an end to imperialism and our utopian concept of socialism, we decided revolutionary theory was needed to guide our practice. Thus for the first time, we started to study Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-tung Thought (MLMTT) seriously. In our activity in the spontaneous movements: ideologically, we were "guided" by the theory of spontaneity, whose altar we worshipped at daily and hourly; politically, we advocated various forms of petty bourgeois anti-imperialism, with some utopian socialism mixed in, but the essence of this activity was militant reformism. The social roots of the members of the WCC are the labor aristocracy and lower-middle farmer sector of the petty bourgeoisie, while the social basis as adults is the intelligentsia and technical stratum (either labor aristocracy or lower petty bourgeoisie). It was our revolutionary sentiments and our practical experiences that led us to gravitate toward scientific socialism.

The M-L study group that started in the Fall of 1975 was formed on the basis of the need for revolutionary theory to guide practice, that theoretical study would be followed by practical application,

* The RU subsequently renamed itself the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), VVAW/WSO became VVAW again, and to this day the latter remains one of the RCP's militant economist fingers, which is "IN STEP WITH THE WORKING CLASS" (The Veteran, Aug.-Sept., '76, p. 16), in their united front "against" imperialism.

and was organized by one of the present WCC members and a Communist Workers Group (CWG)* cadre. This cadre played a mainly positive role at the outset, but left to form another study group without consultation, for which he was criticized, and he fell into some opportunism by following CWG's line and instructions. At the time, we saw this opportunism mainly in reducing women's oppression entirely to economic oppression, and lying. CWG held their cadre was only a "sympathizer" to avoid any blame for this latter opportunism, and criticized this person in such a way that it shattered him. He then left the communist movement altogether. Nevertheless, CWG's line had an effect on the future WCC as will be seen shortly. The KCRWC positively influenced the study group's direction politically mainly through occasional meetings with one of the future WCC members. After about 7-8 months of study, there was struggle in the study group as to where we should be going. One line held we needed to take up the different programmatic and political line questions and openly held party building wasn't the central task. These same advocates also were unwilling to dedicate themselves to proletarian revolution, did not want to form a democratic-centralist organization, were opposed to making communist work the main-thing in their lives. The other line held that of all the questions facing us, the central question or central task was party building since without a genuine M-L party "...it is useless to even think of overthrowing imperialism, of achieving the dictatorship of the proletariat.** The study group members holding this latter line went on to form the WCC, while most of the other members dropped out of even the spontaneous movements, with one consolidating himself as a social prop (he was and is a low level Trade Union Bureaucrat in the lower stratum of the petty bourgeoisie) and another becoming a trotskyite. One of the study group members who did not continue is a working woman who keeps in touch and is regarded as a sympathizer. After studying theory (MLMTT) for a year and struggling over the basic direction practice should take, Principles of Unity (POU's) were developed and the WCC formed in September of 1976.

* CWG at this time held that the CPC and PLA were the leading M-L parties in the world, although they deviated toward ultra-leftism. Later, CWG went over to neo-trotskyism and apparently has disintegrated organizationally. Now CWG (what's left) apparently adheres to the trotskyite "theory of cadres" since they have holed up in themselves.

** J. V. Stalin, Foundations of Leninism, FLP Peking edition, p. 103

At the time, two of our POL's--which we had a very weak grasp of ideologically--were that: The CPC and the PLA are the leading M-L parties in the international communist movement; We take MLMTT as our guide to revolutionary action. The events in China after Mao Tse-tung's death caused considerable alarm and disorientation in WCC. The internal line of the CPC, which we had associated with Mao Tse-tung through the pages of Peking Review and believed to be M-L, had been overthrown. Mainly this, coupled with the ludicrous argumentation against the so-called "gang of four," led us to believe, in late December of 1976, that there had been a revisionist take-over in China. In the last quarter of '76, we also began party building discussions with KCRWC, worked out a joint division of labor on theoretical questions, with progress reports to be prepared and struggle around line to follow. In the first quarter of '77, we prepared two papers, "The Situation in the U.S. Communist Movement"* and "Against the Revisionist Take-Over in China: In Defense of MLMTT and Proletarian Revolution"** for the March, 1977, Denver Forum on Party Building. The alarm and disorientation we spoke of earlier, plus small-circle spirit, led us to attempt to analyze why the revisionists had seized power in China. On the basis of an insufficient investigation and analysis, we wrote an internal paper in which we drew the conclusion that the roots of revisionism were in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) (CPSU-(B)) during the 1930's, which had not been properly understood and corrected. Both the CPC*** and the PLA**** talk about bureaucracy and failing to rely on the masses, with the CPC stating that M-L was not applied to social development. We also saw the "theory" of the productive forces, "bourgeois right," and the forerunner to the "state of the whole people," in the CPSU(B). Initially, our paper on China was entitled "...In Defense of M-L..." instead of "...In Defense of MLMTT..." while our paper "On the Situation..."

*We are no longer distributing this paper as our line has undergone some qualitative changes since then, some aspects were incorrect, and other aspects will be reevaluated when the joint study (which we discuss elsewhere in this paper) takes place. It was helpful in clarifying to us some aspects of party building. See "Let's Move Party Building Forward," p. 1.

**The "Preface..." to this paper, June, 1978, goes into the errors we saw at the time and a method of correction which is much deeper than this sum-up.

***See "On the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat" and "More on the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat," and "On Khrushchov's Phoney Communism and Its Historical Lessons for the World."

****See "Socialism is Built by the Masses, the Party..." by Enver Hoxha

had the incorrectly arrived at conclusion that there were revisionist roots in the international communist movement for over 40 years which had not been properly appreciated. KCRWC convinced us that our study was not thorough or all-sided, therefore, our conclusions were not scientific conclusions, so we changed these two aspects in our public papers. Later, we summed up that the line of CWG, and petty bourgeois intellectualism influenced us during this time. KCRWC initially united with the line of a revisionist take-over but backed away from this and united with the Colorado Organization for Revolutionary Struggle (CORS) and the League for Proletarian Revolution (LPR) who opportunistically excluded us from the Party Building Forum.*

Relations with KCRWC deteriorated following the 1977 Forum, until after the PLA attacked the "theory of the three worlds" in The Theory and Practice of the Revolution and it became apparent that Deng Hsiao-ping would formally be brought back to CPC leadership. KCRWC began to look at the situation in China objectively, and admitted they were incorrect for participating in excluding us from the Forum, while we united with KCRWC's criticism of us for calling for an immediate (organizational) "break" with the CPC, and that our criticisms of Stalin and the CPSU(B), and Mao Tse-tung and the CPC were not based on a scientific investigation. After studying The Theory and Practice of the Revolution (in conjunction with restudying some of Lenin and Stalin's works on imperialism and the national-colonial question), we came to the conclusion that this PLA document was M-L and the "theory of the three worlds" counter-revolutionary and revisionist. It also became clear to us that we should have concentrated on struggling against the "theory of the three worlds" instead of the internal situation in China, and that we didn't follow our POU on the PLA as a leading M-L party in the world. Now, we believe that not looking to the PLA for leadership was mainly due to an insufficient ideological basis for politically declaring the PLA to be a leading party. In the summer of 1977, we also began to see that although we theoretically held winning advanced workers to be a major party building task, we were doing no practical work in the working class movement. Based on our ultra-left errors (e.g. calling for an immediate "break" with the CPC; criticizing Stalin and the CPSU(B), and Mao Tse-tung and the CPC from an insufficient investigation and analysis; no work in the working class movement), we decided to institute a rectif-

* See KCRWC-WCC Speech, "In Defense of Marxism-Leninism on the International Situation," Feb., 3, 1979, p. 1-3, for a deeper explanation.

ication campaign to correct our mistakes ideologically. We realized in general that if ideological remoulding did not take place, the same type of errors would occur again in another situation, in a different form. Since then, this has been driven home to us in particular instances, both within WCC and in other comrades' practice. Being able to politically admit our errors and do self-criticism, while a positive first step, needed to be followed up by ideological remoulding, through study, in practice.

Internally, we initiated study of philosophy and trotskyism. We also initiated a study on party building with a worker we knew from our spontaneous days when he conducted a study group on Puerto Rico. This worker was very active at the time, but under the influence of the Progressive Labor Party (PL) who he would also criticize and disunite with on certain questions and their practice. We struggled with him around bowing to spontaneity and economism (which PL combines with adventurism). We also struggled against PL's trotskyite line on the national question, and began a study on the national-colonial question applied to Puerto Rico with this worker. We steadily won this worker away from PL's influence as their local cadre could parrot the line but not defend it. We proposed a closed debate with PL in which a few workers would attend. PL replied that one of the WCC members was a police agent and they refused to debate. We demanded they produce proof of this serious accusation. None was forthcoming. WCC and the worker-contact summed up that PL resorted to this opportunist slander and objective agent-provocateur activity* to avoid principled struggle around line in practice which they couldn't defend. This worker remained active for a while, but became depressed when his wife decided not to take up M-L study (she was also a worker and came from the working class too) and other family problems developed. He then started drinking heavily again and withdrew. We had thought this worker was essentially an advanced worker (he did have some difficulty with complicated theoretical questions) according to the general characteristics Lenin lays out in "A Retrograde Trend in Russian Social Democracy," (Collected Works, Vol. 4, p. 255-285) which we believed and still believe applies to the U.S. today, even if we haven't found any practically yet.

We made a similar mistake in overrating an individual one of

* See "On the Struggle Against the Activities of the Agent-Provocateurs," p. 6, WCC reprint entitled On the Struggle Against Agent-Provocateurs

the WCC members had worked with in VVAW/WSO, and struggled with through correspondence and occasional meetings for years. This person had started an M-L study group, done union organizing at his workplace, professed to be devoted to proletarian revolution, became a candidate member of WCC, and engaged in mainly theoretical study for months. But when his wife (who was from the labor aristocracy and still closely tied to it) left after several months of M-L study stating her priorities were "me first, my child second, and the proletariat last," he became depressed (his daughter also left). Shortly thereafter, he questioned his role in the revolution, vacillated several times on leaving the collective, fell into denying past statements were made, dropped out of the communist movement entirely and joined the ranks of backward workers by caving into liberalism and petty bourgeois selfishness. He then returned to heavy alcohol and drug use.

During the time of intense theoretical work and ideological struggle, and practical work with these people, which spanned a year until the summer of '78, we also carried out propaganda and agitation in the working class movement in Wichita, Kansas, and were preparing to develop factory nuclei. As we mentioned above, we overrated these people in thinking and working with them as if they were advanced workers (the latter person talked about above, did mislead us as to his social origins). On the one hand, as workers, both these people, to a limited extent, led other workers, struggled against economic exploitation and political and social oppression, accepted scientific socialism and tried to propagate it, although their efforts were not systematic or consistent. On the other hand, workers in their factories (one of them in large plants) were fairly lethargic in struggling and did not accept scientific socialism in practice, that is, to the point of study and the hard struggle to apply it. In our work with these people, we drew the conclusion that we prematurely considered them to be advanced workers. What was needed was work and struggle with them over a fairly long period of time to see if they could become independent working class leaders. They were basically average workers, with hints of advanced in them but many more backward characteristics, which gained the upper hand when personal problems and personal sacrifices came to the fore. An inability to cope properly with personal problems (with collective help), accept difficult personal sacrifices are not characteristics of advanced workers, or genuine Marxist-Leninists for that matter. Our experiences with the present spontaneous working class movement (we view th's movement to be at a

low level but rising), other comrades' experiences, particularly KCRWC, and our initial observations of the U.S. working class movement nation-wide, are leading us to consider these phenomena theoretically.

Returning to the last quarter of '77 and struggle in the U.S. communist movement, relations with KCRWC improved as a result of mutual self-criticism and closer views on party building and the international situation. KCRWC united that there had been a revisionist take-over in China, and KCRWC and WCC agreed that the PLA was elaborating the M-L line on the international situation, most notably in The Theory and Practice of the Revolution, against the "theory of the three worlds" led by the CPC revisionists. We had our first meeting with the Kansas Collective for Proletarian Revolution (KCPR) at this time. KCPR leaned toward the above views but were still studying the questions.

During this same period of summer '77 - summer '78, we, KCPR, and KCRWC improved our understanding of party building. We independently came up with similar analysis on party building due to our experiences and study. WCC, by summer of '77, was beginning to see how we, or any other small group for that matter, could not develop correct lines on all the burning questions in the movement by ourselves. We had tried to do a few analyses by ourselves, and did poorly in them, as we have already stated. In doing these analyses and making the errors we did, we began to realize the poor quality of what work we were able to do and the large amount of questions needing answering. This is what made us start thinking about the need for a M-L center to push forward the development of M-L lines on all questions and develop organization to aid the development of M-L lines and unity. We began discussion with KCPR and KCRWC around this which eventually led to joint issuance of "Let's Move Party Building Forward," July, 1978. During the first half of '78, KCPR and KCRWC vacillated on the need for national joint study on party building, while we were liberal at first in not struggling for our views on this question, but "Let's Move..." came out with the need for national joint study on party building. WCC developed new POU's in January, 1978. KCRWC later developed points for POU's adding to and criticizing some of our POU's, which we united with. In theory then, there were no outstanding differences of principle between KCRWC and WCC. Discussion took place around what organizational form was needed to contain our (apparently) relatively high level of unity. At the time, KCPR and KCRWC were well on the road to merging, which the KCRWC comrades explained. In the

summer of '78, it was jointly agreed in principle to merge KCRWC and WCC, with joint theoretical commissions to be established, joint practical work to be carried out, with the location question to be decided. However, shortly thereafter, KCRWC and KCPR, through their members on the party building commission, did not uphold in practice the basic line in "Let's Move...", e.g. raising up for discussion again the need for national joint study on party building, and proposing nation-wide, joint national liberation support committee work. Efforts to jointly implement the line in "Let's Move..." on a national basis were paralyzed throughout the latter part of 1978. Joint practical work did not materialize either as KCRWC (KCPR went up to Kansas City) bowed to spontaneity and immersed themselves in the local spontaneous movements, and based their practical activity in community organizational forms. Mainly in view of the above, we summarized our relations with KCRWC, criticizing them and ourselves in the process, and broke off merger plans as 1978 drew to a close.

In December, 1978, we began to implement the basic line in "Let's Move Party Building Forward." Tactically, we began to organize for a multilateral meeting on party building which was proposed in general in July of '78 in the KCPR-KCRWC-WCC Joint Response to Marxist-Leninist Collective's (MLC's) June ('78) Letter. The Multilateral Conference (MULC) on Party Building is still in progress and remains to be summed up on a collective basis, so we will not deal with it in particular here. In January of '79, KCRWC began to see how bowing to spontaneity had led to the political problems we spoke of earlier. With the Denver Forum on the International Situation scheduled for February 3, 1979, we agreed to work jointly with KCRWC on a presentation which resulted in a joint speech. Again, the Denver Forum is in the process of being summed up collectively so we will not address it further in particular, except to say that for this, and for our involvement in the Pacific Collective's (PC's) attempt to organize a response to the Unite! articles on the small circles, we recognize the need to improve our method of struggle. In general, we think Demarcation's organization of the "Joint Statement in Opposition to the Cutting Off Of Aid To Socialist Albania By The Government of China" (which we participated in), the Denver Forum, PC's attempt to organize a response, and the MULC illustrate the importance and need to build up M-L centralized leadership, which we view as the principal contradiction in party building. During the Spring of this year, we produced three pamphlets ("How Lenin Fought...Centrism," "On the Struggle Against Agent-Provocateurs," and "The Bolshevisation of the Communist Parties of the Capitalist Countries By Means of Overcoming Social-Democratic Traditions") which consist chiefly of Comintern reprints

on subjects we believe are topical and important for the party building movement. We have been working on a polemic against MLOC/CPUSA (M-L) which has been delayed several times for the other work we are doing. Our relations with KCRWC have steadily improved throughout 1979 by uniting through line in practice, with our joint paper here the chief theoretical and practical result. If we continue developing on the same course, higher organizational forms of unity should follow.

Up until recently, we have always held that Mao Tse-tung was a great M-L. In preparations for the MULC, we made a superficial investigation of Mao (and the CPC) and did not see how Mao theoretically revised basic M-L organizational principles on the party. Through studying the results of a deeper study KCRWC had done, and further study on our part, we found that Mao theoretically justifies in the party: factions and "two-line struggle" (in practice), instead of the M-L practice of eliminating factions and a single, M-L line in practice; leaving the "bourgeoisie right in the party," instead of purging opportunist elements after ideological struggle. Mao's line and practice on these questions is centrist and revisionist, and on this basis we no longer consider him a great M-L. We have not completely negated Mao Tse-tung's line and practice as we need to study and analyze further the historical experience of the CPC. But one thing is clear: to move forward in M-L party building, all of Mao Tse-tung's erroneous lines and practice must be repudiated in practice which requires an extensive summation of the past. We think this applies to all genuine Marxist-Leninists.

We look forward to the time when we can put an end to our wretched, narrow and amateurish existence as a small circle but recognize we can only do this through uniting on a principled basis with other comrades in the struggle to carry out the central task of U.S. M-L's and advanced workers, the building of a vanguard party of the U.S. proletariat. We have made our share of errors in the past mainly stemming from errors in method of investigation and analysis and method of struggle which reflect bourgeois ideology. We must work to overcome mistakes and shortcomings ideologically, through study, in practice.

We hope that this short history of the WCC provides comrades with some insight into our ideological, political, and organizational development. It's just a beginning, in a long series of beginnings. We look forward to receiving criticisms from other comrades because constructive criticism, and self-criticism ideologically in practice is essential to continue general development along the M-L path, the path of proletarian revolution.