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DMLO: One Step Forward, Two Steps Back
(Analysis of the Split)

Committee for Economic Equality
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(Now, Detroit Socialist Collective)

Many hours and many words have already been devoted to the struggle and crisis in D'TO which eventually led to an organizational split in September, 1977. We feel, nevertheless, that it is necessary to add yet a few more words to the analysis. Although the struggle was a painful process for us all, it has deepened our understanding of certain questions that are significant, not just to us, but to the whole anti-dogmatic trend. We have learned a great deal; if others can learn from our lessons without having to repeat some of the errors, so much the better. We recognize that, although lengthy, this is still not a totally definitive analysis of the political questions which we identified around the split. However, it does reflect our present level of political understanding. We welcome the opportunity to deepen our analysis through constructive criticisms from our comrades in the trend.

After analyzing the struggle in DMLO from the vantage point of hindsight, it has become even clearer to those of us who left that the split did represent a two-line struggle, between petit bourgeois ideology and proletarian ideology. We say this, not to separate the petit bourgeois "bad guys" from the proletarian "good guys"--them vs. us--but because any party capable of attracting and leading the working class through a socialist revolution must reflect in its analysis, program, and practice, a working class ideology. Part of our task as a trend, then, is to isolate, identify and overcome bourgeois ideology in whatever form it appears. Lenin makes it clear in What Is To Be Done? that this is an important aspect of class struggle.

"Since there can be no talk of an independent ideology formulated by the working masses themselves in the process of their movement, the only choice is--either bourgeois or socialist ideology. There is no middle course (for mankind has not created a "third" ideology, and moreover; in a society torn by class antagonisms, there can never be a non-class or an above-class ideology). Hence, to belittle the socialist ideology in any way, to turn aside from it in the slightest degree means to strengthen bourgeois ideology."
(emphasis in original)

In this paper we refer to the line upheld by the majority in DMLO as reflecting petit bourgeois rather than bourgeois ideology. This is not contradictory to Lenin's statement that there are only two kinds of ideology--bourgeois and socialist--for by definition any ideology which does not aid the interests of the working class aids the interests of the bourgeoisie. However, the term petit bourgeois ideology recognizes the particular manifestations of bourgeois ideology--idealism, characterized by subjectivism, individualism, and liberalism--which tend to flow out of the material conditions of the petit bourgeois intelligentsia.

The struggle for a proletarian world outlook is not easy, given the fact that bourgeois ideology is the dominant world view in our society, and that we have certainly not made ourselves immune to that ideology simply by becoming revolutionaries. But it is an essential struggle since a non-dialectical, metaphysical world outlook lays the

foundation for both dogmatism and revisionism within our movement.

The successful struggle against petit bourgeois ideology depends on two things: 1) understanding in a practical and theoretical sense the necessity of communist organization; and 2) seeing the dialectical unity of theory and practice, understanding that study becomes meaningful only as it is used, and on the other hand, that developing a solid material base means something only insofar as we are functioning as communists; furthermore, that communist line becomes real only as it is tested and validated in practice. It was the consistent resistance to recognize and act on these things that eventually forced us to leave DMLO. In this paper we will try to document through our history this two-line struggle and how petit bourgeois ideology became a material force, ultimately supported by the majority of the organization.

Some History

The first area, concerning the development of a communist organization, became a key one very early in DMLO's life. In the initial formation of DMLO in September, 1975, it appeared that we had a fundamental and collective understanding of the fact that:"

"t...theoretical, political, and organizational principles constitute an integral whole in Lenin's teaching on the party. Without observing each and all of these principles it is impossible to foster in a party the spirit of revolutionary action and make it a guiding force in the building of socialism and communism. Lenin elaborated the Party's organizational principles, standards of Party life and principles of party leadership. A party cannot fulfill its vanguard role unless it is a highly organized, militant section of the working class. Lenin noted that in order to succeed in fulfilling its historical mission the party's ideological unity had to be backed up by organizational unity." (Preface to V.I. Lenin On the Proletarian Party of a New Type, emphasis added)

In fact, one of our first political struggles took place around this question.

The precursor to DMLO had been the Detroit Independent Coalition, formed by the coming together of several M-L study groups, two small collectives, and some individuals striving to end their isolation, make a clean break from the dogmatic trend within the M-L movement, and struggle for greater theoretical, political, and organizational unity of the left as an initial step toward party-building. The coalition was predominantly white and petit bourgeois in class background or position, with most having college degrees and many in professional jobs (doctors, nurses, lawyers, community college teachers, and students). While people came to the coalition out of a variety of political histories (anarchism, Trotskyism, narrow nationalism, socialist feminism, Boggs) and varied levels of political development (some being seasoned activists while others were very new to Marxism-Leninism), there was an ongoing sorting out process so that many with strong differences left early on in the coalition. Given the political mix of the group, (the clearest thing uniting us politically at first was our common rejection of the dogmatists), we spent the first four months of the Coalition's life summing

up and sharing our previous practical work and developing some of the ideological principles that would serve as the foundation on which to build a more disciplined organizational form. There was no collective approach to practical work at this time, which was generally seen as a weakness of this loose coalitional form.

At the point when four months of commission work on the woman question, national question, trade union work, and service work were being summed up and presented as a basis for beginning organizational unity, the Detroit Collective presented to the group M-L principles of unity (including M-L as a science, the role of the state, the vanguard role of the industrial working class, the unity of theory and practice, and the centrality of party-building) as well as positions supporting the Negro Nation thesis and the USSR as a co-equal danger. These were to be voted on immediately, with the Detroit Collective taking the position that "the development of political unity should take place before practice (or consolidating into a democratic-centralist organization) to insure that actions we took would be unified and that we would be coming from an agreed upon framework." Most of these principles of unity were accepted after some debate and modification, as were the study commission principles of unity. The majority position was that more study was needed before agreeing to the Negro Nation thesis and position on the USSR, and that we were unwilling to conduct that study in an organizational form that was divorced from collective practice and accountability. The Detroit Collective then proposed that since in their evaluation there was insufficient unity to move to a higher form of organization, we should remain a coalition, continue to share practice when possible, and struggle ideologically to develop sufficient unity to unite with a national organization. Having apparently gone through some organizational changes of their own, the DC now felt it was wrong to "encourage local forms to consolidate a la PWOC." Again the majority disagreed and accepted the Cass Trumbull Collective's proposal that "the weak level of unity of a coalition is insufficient to engage in the internal struggle necessary to build theory and practice...A coalition cannot build discipline and responsibility, and cannot build forums for criticism/self-criticism as effectively as a democratic-centralist organization...all factors which are necessary for building communist work in practice and study." The Detroit Collective then left the coalition and disbanded, with most of its members joining OL. The others, with the exception of two members, consolidated into the Detroit Marxist-Leninist Organization.

What is significant to our discussion here is that the vast majority felt that we did have sufficient political unity to move ahead and that they wanted an organizational form that demanded unity of will and action, discipline, and accountability. We recognized that there were still undefined political differences that had not surfaced or consolidated yet, given our general primitiveness and uneven development, but we were united around the belief that those differences could only be clarified and resolved within the context of a democratic-centralist organization.

In the beginning, people were energetic in moving ahead on our four organizationally-agreed-to goals: 1) consolidate the organization; 2) develop our national and local party-building ties; 3) develop our industrial and national minority base; and 4) develop our theoretical

understanding of M-L and overcome uneven development. Consolidation of the organization went without serious roadblocks; a leadership body was elected (of which four out of its five members were to later support the minority position in Sept. 1977). This Central Committee included ideologically and practically developed leadership, as well as women and Black cadre who had assumed leadership responsibilities during the coalition and were seen as developing leadership. A corresponding secretary was elected to communicate with other organizations and develop a more thorough understanding of party-building, and work groups were set up along collectively defined lines of mass work. We began organization-wide study on the National Question because of its primacy in moving anti-racist work forward. We approached it as a total organization to deal with uneven development and the feelings of distrust inherited from the majority of people's past experiences with sectarian and dogmatic methods of line development (OL, RU, CLP). We also entered into coalition work with CLP, RCP, and OL, and began contacting other organizations outside of Detroit.

After the first six months our accomplishments as a new organization were significant. We had developed DMLC positions on Angola and on the newly-implemented Detroit busing plan. We had a programmatic thrust for a city-wide women's organization and helped provide leadership to the Anti-Imperialist Action Coalition, which was doing anti-racist work around Southern Africa. We developed a city-wide organization of progressive health workers and professionals, began a mass educational forum series, began caucus work in several industrial plants, began developing a strategy around unemployment, initiated an internal bulletin, and developed ties with the trend and PWOC (through which we developed our position on the danger of dogmatism). We also recruited five new people, including three Black cadre. Commissions were set up to deepen our understanding of the "burning questions" facing the M-L movement. Clearly, consolidating the organization had moved us forward.

Differences Emerge

Within that progress, however, were some serious weaknesses. Our material base within key sections of the working class was very weak. We had only two cadre actually working in industrial jobs, and although 6-8 others had volunteered to get plant jobs, or were seriously considering it, job-hunting was progressing very slowly. Furthermore, our anti-racist work was minimal. We had limited contact within the public school system through which to do on-going work around the busing plan; further, there was little active opposition to the plan. The coalition doing work around southern Africa was short-lived. What made these weaknesses even more difficult to overcome was a growing resistance to democratic-centralism coming out of petit bourgeois idealist notions of how to build a communist organization. This resistance was manifested in a number of ways over the following months up until the split:

1. A number of work assignments and our six-month plan were developed, then not followed through, with little or no explanation.
2. Some study commissions met infrequently if at all, with only

sporadic reports on their progress and no attempt to lay out neatly why they were running into problems (except to point to scheduling difficulties), and what help they needed from the larger organization. One criticism which was raised and received some support was that individuals weren't assigned to commissions that directly related to their own mass work. This ignored the fact that the commissions weren't meant to be tailored specifically to individuals' mass work, but to answer questions relating to the organization as a whole, e.g. an analysis of the political economy of Detroit.

a pattern of

3. There was ~~xxxxxxx~~ re-consideration of CC and organizational decisions before those decisions had even been tested out. For example, once decided by the CC and the individuals, two members' work assignments kept getting challenged, re-decided, re-hashed over a period of many months, tying up hours of work group and Central Committee time with no real resolution and follow-through.

4. We became bogged down in subjectivism. Discussion of personal problems began to take precedence over discussions of mass work within the work groups. Personal priorities began to take precedence over organizational priorities. For example, two members took extended (six-week) vacations without working out collectively in advance how their absence would affect their organizational work. In one case, it meant that a workplace study group which had been in the offing for many months had to be postponed. In the other case, it meant a serious leadership gap in the CC which was only dealt with after the problem was raised by someone else.

5. Some cadre resisted taking initiative to sum up their mass work to the best of their ability, in light of our stated organizational goals and principles of unity. Instead, scapegoating the organization for not providing them with the leadership necessary to do this, became a substitute for analysis and accountability. Furthermore, even when the theoretical groundwork was laid for doing work in a particular area (such as unemployment work), decisions were still not carried out by some people without resistance.

These would have been serious but not insurmountable obstacles if they had been recognized and taken on in a non-liberal way. Unfortunately, liberalism and subjectivism ran rampant. Many who later left DMLO constantly called for greater accountability, discipline, and initiative, yet these criticisms were labeled "a mother-hen approach", "subjective," "mechanistic," and "bureaucratic."

After the first six months or so, the Central Committee recognized this resistance to be ~~xxxxxxxx~~ posing a significant enough problem to warrant an organization paper on democratic centralism--how we viewed it and how it should function in DMLO at that particular time. While the CC accepted the criticism that "we should be more conscious of defining the overall political questions with which the work groups should grapple," they also recognized that they "should not lay out all the answers to organizational questions. We couldn't if we wanted to."

The reasoning behind this was that "one aspect of democratic-centralism is the necessity of analyzing ideas and experiences. If our political outlook is going to be correct, we must have the broadest input of ideas, and collective mass work experience, and the fullest struggle around those questions. But to be really collective, each member must take up that responsibility. All of us must be based in some area of mass work, and struggle to develop the skills needed to analyze our particular situation and draw the general political lessons from that work. These individual analyses can then be taken up in the work group to form a broader and more collective picture of that area of work. The synthesis of those lessons should then go from the work group to the CC where they can be struggled further in the context of the whole organization to form the political outlook and strategies of DMLO as a whole. In this way, DMLO will reflect the fullest relationship between individual and collective, democracy and centralism."

Taken out of context, this quote might lead to the conclusion that the CC had an empiricist approach to the development of line and strategy, in which the whole is simply a practical sum-up of its parts. What must also be kept in mind, however, is the fact that the CC was at the same time pushing for the general theoretical tasks of the study commissions to be completed. Although there was no clear opposition to the analysis that poorly-functioning democratic centralism was an organizational problem and that strong tendencies toward liberalism, subjectivism, and were holding back our work, there was only agreement in the abstract. When efforts were made to link those tendencies to specific errors of individuals, we heard the familiar refrain, "that's being bureaucratic, not political." Petit bourgeois errors were usually attributed to "the other guy."

The struggle around how to build a communist organization surfaced in a slightly new form with the Central Committee elections in the Fall of 1976. Unfortunately, subjectivism muddled the lines of struggle and set up strawman arguments. The positions were erroneously characterized as "some people understand the importance of line, program, and strong political leadership," while others (i.e. those who had been in the majority on the previous CC as well as those who agreed with them) wanted the CC to be only a bureaucratic, administrative body of work group representatives taking little responsibility for providing political leadership; or, as one person characterized it, "the political view vs. the consolidationist view." What got lost in the discussion was the fact that both sides agreed that the CC should be a strong leadership body. What we disagreed on was what that meant specifically for DMLO at that point in time. The clearest proponent of the "political vs. consolidationist" argument ran for the CC on the analysis that "the CC needs to be more of a political body to develop more of a political view." The platform for his candidacy put forward the following tasks for DMLO, (as if they had not been agreed to as organizational goals from the beginning):

- a. CC provide political direction
- b. development of DMLO cadre including internal study and political debate to clarify line
- c. "develop a DMLO presence...through the development of 'keeping the whole organization'" attitude
- d. recruitment

The other analysis, supported by many who later left, did not disagree with those tasks but also put forward the view that the CC had provided political direction for the organization and that it was not being followed--in some instances just ignored or constantly reviewed. To us, a major aspect of political leadership was identifying and isolating political errors and tendencies that were holding back our development. This we had tried to do, perhaps primitively, by struggling against tendencies toward idealism, liberalism, and subjectivism. This position also held that development of line and program rests not with the CC alone, but also demands accountability of cadre to the organization in carrying out of tasks and bringing evaluations back to further the organization's analysis. This did not mean that if work groups and study commissions had been meeting and collectively summing up their work, we would automatically have all the answers and a correct line and program. But as long as this wasn't happening, we wouldn't even have the basis for developing a correct line, program, and strategy.

The overwhelming majority voted in favor of the first position, however, and a new CC was elected, with only one out of its five members holding the minority position. The new CC was given a clear mandate to "develop more of a political view." Although we disagreed with the majority position, we felt we should test out the line in practice, assuming that if it was incorrect, that would be discovered as we evaluated the position at a later point. Unfortunately we found out that our assumption was wrong; because we had never gotten to the root of the problems in DMLO, and because there was resistance to critical, objective evaluation, the majority still felt nine months later that we were "adrift as an organization, with little political development and no organizational growth."

Although the question of how to build a communist organization was a fundamental one for everyone concerned with party-building, there was an even more fundamental question underlying it: how do we understand the dialectical unity of theory and practice in the process of line and program development? Here the differences broke down along the lines of what was essentially an idealist petit bourgeois approach vs. what we feel is a more materialist approach to line development. The manifestations of idealism on this question were numerous throughout the history of DMLO:

1. Wanting all the answers before we could take the first step; raising questions which were beyond our organizational ability to answer at a given point in time; failing to understand that as developing M-L's in a relatively new organization limited by a local perspective, we had to begin from the shallower to get to the deeper.

"Marxists hold that in human society activity in production develops step by step from a lower to a higher level and that consequently man's knowledge, whether of nature or of society, also develops step by step from a lower to a higher level, that is, from the shallower to the deeper, from the one-sided to the many-sided." (Mao, On Practice)

Example #1: Two cadre whose mass work had lagged wrote a paper saying that "because we have not defined what the goals and criteria for 'good' mass work are and which are priorities, the quality and validity of this work is often in question. Without a clear purpose within the more long-range strategy, our mass work can only lead to spontaneous advances at best and the stifling of ourselves and others as revolutionaries at worst." Their proposal included evaluating our practice through defining: "What is a mass organization (different kinds and how they can or cannot contribute to cadre development)? What is a cadre group? a study group? a party? How are these groups inter-related? How can one help build the other? How can you develop socialists out of these groups, or can you? If not, how can you move from consciousness-raising to socialist building?" Although it is legitimate to raise general questions around our work, the context and tone of their paper and discussion negated the fact that special work around our approach to party-building was being done, and that it was generally considered one of our strongest areas. Furthermore, our participation in the Committee of Five was proceeding well, and what we especially needed was beginning sum-ups of mass work to deepen our understanding of fusion and begin to answer some of the questions they had raised. Instead, decisions and suggestions on how to move were rejected by simply not being acted on, with the onus being put back on the organization for not providing enough leadership.

Example #2: After organizational approval of an approach to building a working class women's organization around some key programmatic issues, several cadre assigned to the Woman Question Study Commission began challenging that decision on the grounds that too many theoretical questions were being left unanswered, and that there were underlying but undefined political differences around the Woman Question. What was being ignored was the fact that we were operating off of a beginning theoretical understanding of the special oppression of women, and that we needed further practice and study to deepen that understanding. Also, they were ignoring the fact that it was also their responsibility to help answer those more complex theoretical questions and define what they thought the political differences were.

A variation of this failure to build from the shallower to the deeper was the tendency to assume we were operating in a political vacuum, with no line or program or basis of unity. This was a recurrent theme, up to and including the split, and became a scapegoat for why people hadn't moved off dead center in some areas. In fact, we had formed DMLC around certain principles of unity, and in fact, we had developed line and program in certain key areas such as trade union work, work in health, organizing women, the National Question, and United Front. What we hadn't done was to systematically implement and evaluate our developing line and program. The majority was satisfied to analyze our organizational problems from a metaphysical and circular argument: We don't have line and program because people can't do the necessary work because we don't have line and program to guide them.

2. Failure to look at how differing lines were being implemented in practice to determine the correctness or incorrectness of a position.

For example, at the same time that those who left DMLO were being criticized for not understanding, or obstructing line and program development, many of the accomplishments pointed out in the majority position were areas in which people who later formed CEI had provided key political leadership (7-hour day campaign, mass educationals, work with the trend, working class women's organization, Detroit General Hospital Patients' Council, internal educational work around United Front and party-building). Apparently to the majority the proof is not in the pudding but in one's own head. Through some metaphysical turn of logic they saw us downplaying the importance of program at the same time that we were helping to develop it. Again Mao speaks right to the point: "The truth of any knowledge or theory is determined by not by subjective feelings but by objective results in social practice." (On Practice)

3. Failing to appreciate fully the necessity of a material base within key sections of the working class as a fundamental part of the development of program and line.

"Whoever wants to know a thing has no way of doing so except by coming into contact with it, that is, by living (practising) in its environment...If you want to know a certain thing or a certain class of things directly, you must personally participate in the practical struggle to change reality, to change that thing or class of things, for only thus can you come into contact with them as phenomena; only through personal participation in the practical struggle to change reality can you uncover the essence of that thing or class of things and comprehend them." (Mao, On Practice)

The most clearest example of this came out in polemics around how we interpreted placing primary emphasis on the industrial working class. Some of us who left DMLO argued that it was a serious organizational problem that of the eight or so people who had said they wanted to get industrial jobs, most had either changed their minds over a year later or had dropped out of the organization, and that we still had only three people in auto and one other in an industrial job. This, we said, would necessitate looking organizationally at the obstacles people felt in getting plant jobs, as well as re-directing the work of people in secondary areas to further develop our industrial base. The majority felt (although they couldn't document it) that we had been "guilt-tripping" people into getting plant jobs, and that the main factor in building our base was developing a line and program that would attract working class people. In response to this position, the minority paper said:

"To correctly oppose guilt-tripping into plants cannot...be used as a rationale for ignoring the basic, objective political truth - the two key areas on which our line and program must be based and to which it must return are the industrial working class (in Detroit, like it or not, this means auto) and the black community around the reality of national minority oppression. It is simply common sense that if we haven't the material base within our organization to carry out day-to-day work, to test and develop line and program, our job becomes twice as hard, Not impossible, but harder. (Lacking) a solid

material base within the organization implies some basic shifting in organizational work. The tone of the majority paper is that it doesn't really matter where we are placed, to whom we are accountable as long as we have "correct" line and make an occasional respectful reference to the assumed "importance" of the industrial working class. What the majority of the CC ignores with this view is a materialist approach to how line is developed and the relationship of practice to line--this form of idealism must be stopped before it becomes epidemic and infects the entire organization. (Addendum to CC Minority Position, presented to general body meeting 9/77)

4. Not recognizing the importance of implementing a line when it's agreed upon, testing it, summing it up for evaluation of the line. "Marxists hold that man's social practice alone is the criterion of the truth of his knowledge of the external world...What actually happens is that man's knowledge is verified only when he achieves the anticipated results in the process of social practice." (Mao again, On Practice)

A good example of this occurred around our development of the dual system analysis on the National Question, which was presented at the anti-racism conference in Detroit in Jan. 1978. The organization had collectively studied the National Question for four months when DMLO was first formed. A study commission was then given responsibility for developing a further analysis to be brought before the organization. Eight months later, in early November prior to the anti-racism conference, a first draft was shared. It was criticized and radical changes suggested. A second draft came to the work groups two weeks before the conference for essentially an up-or-down vote as there was no time for another draft. Criticism was accepted on the weakness of trying to develop organizational line without time for full organizational input, but it was assured that the line was only to be shared with our comrades in the trend and to get their input, and that after the conference there would be a third draft and thorough discussion. Not only was this never done, but there was also never any checking up done to see how the line was being put into practice, never any evaluation of the correctness of the line from testing it in practice or re-evaluation of the original analysis on this basis. Several who later left DMLO began work on a critique of the dual system analysis to share with the organization, but the bulletin in which it was to be included restricted its focus to party-building. The majority position as reflected in a paper written for the meeting at which the split occurred stated that "the anti-racism conference...provided DMLO an important experience in political line development and struggle."

There is, of course, an inter-relationship between the two major points of disagreement (on building a communist organization and on the correct relationship between theory and practice). If one sees the absolute necessity of using practice as a gauge for testing line and a material base as an essential element of program development, then a disciplined communist organization also becomes absolutely essential. If, on the other hand, one operates off of idealist notions of what it means to be "political," if positions are meant to be developed mainly out of our heads and then not taken anywhere and evaluated, then who

needs accountability and discipline? All we need is a political wizard.

The Split

Nine months after taking office with a mandate to provide greater political direction, the Central Committee called for a general body meeting to evaluate the basis of stagnation and backward movement in DMLO and to identify the central contradiction in the organization. The majority of the CC put out the position that "the inability of DMLO to develop an organizational shared political line and program is the fundamental cause of many of the apparent difficulties the organization has encountered in the past eight months." (emphasis in original). What was essentially a description of a problem was put forward as the explanation for the problem.

The minority position (initiated by the dissenting member of the CC) put forward that the central contradiction in DMLO was "our central task of party-building (the highest form of proletarian organization) on one hand vs. the lack of proletarianization within DMLO." Proletarianization was defined as "developing in our line, program, and practice, the world outlook of the proletariat," which involved four overlapping aspects: 1) a material base within key sectors of the working class, with primary emphasis on the industrial working class, and active recognition in our organizational composition and mass work of areas of the special oppression of national minorities and women; 2) development of clear political line and program that represents the interests of the working class; 3) proletarian, principled methods of struggle and criticism/self-criticism and 4) functioning democratic-centralism. The minority position further stated that the first two aspects were primary, while the third and fourth became significant insofar as they set up roadblocks to dealing with the first two. An addendum written to the minority position expanded on the idea that we did in fact have line and program in some areas which wasn't being carried out. In this case we needed to look at what "petit bourgeois baggage" we were carrying as an organization that prevented unity of action. Second, the same petit bourgeois baggage was holding us back from further line and program development, and this could only be determined by looking back to specific strengths and weaknesses measured against our six-month plan (which the majority had apparently dismissed as unimportant or else forgotten).

What the minority position also began to do was to establish the links between idealist tendencies within the organization and our class composition:

"The most general class characterization that can be made of DMLO is that we are made up of representatives of the intelligentsia--in that the vast majority of people have college and professional degrees, contrary to the majority of people in this country. This definition is based on Lenin's usage of the term in One Step Forward, Two Steps Back. Lenin based his view of the intelligentsia on a long quote from Karl Kautsky (KK was not, obviously, a renegade at this point in history). Kautsky defines intellectual and intelligentsia..."to include not only writers but in general all educated (emphasis mine)

p people, the members of the liberal professions, the brain workers... (in looking at our particular history, most of us would fit one or more of these categories...) (the intellectual's status of life and his conditions of labour are not proletarian and this gives rise to a certain antagonism in sentiments and ideas... As an isolated individual, the proletariat is nothing. His whole strengths, his whole progress, all his hopes and expectations are derived from organization... He feels big and strong when he forms part of a big and strong organism... Quite different is the case of the intellectual. He does not fight by means of power, but by argument. His weapons are his personal knowledge, his personal ability, his personal convictions... It is only with difficulty that he submits to being a part subordinate to a whole and then only from necessity, not from inclination." ("Addendum to CC Minority Position," 9/77)

The argument of the minority was not that because most of us had college degrees, we were "doomed" to be petit bourgeois intellectuals. Nor were we putting out a "more-proletarian-than-thou" position, although this is how some of the majority reacted. What we were trying to say was that, no matter what kind of jobs we might hold now, our personal histories had set up conditions in which petit bourgeois attitudes and methods of work would flourish. We had to realize this, not to purge ourselves of guilt, but to recognize and overcome those tendencies and build a more proletarian organization. This line of argument should have been familiar and well-received by at least some of the majority, who had proposed very early in DMLO that a special commission be set up to study petit bourgeois ideology, which they felt was a problem in the organization. Apparently they either felt now that we had won our struggle against petit bourgeois ideology, or that it was only a problem when attributed to someone else.

The majority position had several fundamental weaknesses. The most glaring was the fact that it never even attempted to analyze why the organization, after many months of saying that line and program development were key, had barely moved ahead on its stated goals. It was instead satisfied with the metaphysical analysis that we needed program and line in order to develop program and line.

Second, subjectivism again reared its ugly head to muddle the lines of argument. The definition of proletarianization put forward by the minority was reduced to "being with the workers," or building an "organization of organizers rather than a political organization." In this context clear, principled struggle became impossible.

Third, the majority would give only lip-service to the political importance of organizational questions. The minority was criticized for seeing the difficulties in DMLO as only an aggregate of personal shortcomings and were called bureaucratic for our concern with questions of liberalism, subjectivism, and idealism. In fact, we saw liberalism and idealism as organizational weaknesses, as an incorrect world outlook that was becoming consolidated. The fact that these idealist errors were made wasn't even the fundamental problem, for errors can be rectified. But the fact that the majority refused to even recognize that

these errors were serious ones and that they were organizational problems, not just individual ones, made it impossible to move on them.

Several things were apparent to us at this time: first, the lines of struggle were variations on an old familiar theme that we had struggled against unsuccessfully for many months. Second, we felt that the majority position calling for "political" leadership had already proved itself incorrect in practice during the previous year, and we couldn't in good faith follow it for still another year. Third, we knew from past practice and decisions made at the last meeting that the majority consistently resisted objective evaluation of line to determine its correctness or incorrectness. Given these conditions, we felt we had no choice but to leave.

In retrospect, we can see more clearly our own errors in the process, some of which were due to our level of political development. Perhaps our most fundamental error was to mistake paper unity for real political unity. We assumed that because people said they wanted to build a democratic-centralist organization based on a certain set of principles, that this was in fact the case. What we might have done when there was foot-dragging, subjective challenges to organizational decisions, or reference to our "total lack of political line," was to have gone back consistently to appropriate principles of unity to determine whether people did in reality understand and agree with those principles. We might also have referred to some of the classical writings on democratic-centralism, and the role of the party, and dialectical-materialism during the course of the struggle, to have shown that our "bureaucratic", "mechanical" concerns were shared by people like Lenin and Mao. Although this might not have changed the outcome of the struggle, it perhaps would have clarified the lines at an earlier point, and put it into the larger context of the international communist movement.

A second weakness was our inability to effectively combat the liberalism which became a dominant trend within the organization. We were varied in our ability to carry out the struggle, depending on our own level of political understanding or ability to overcome our own liberalism. On the other hand, a certain base of practice over time was necessary to establish that an idealistic view of communist organization and the theory-practice dialectic was indeed a consolidated tendency and not simply isolated individual errors. We would not have had the objective basis to draw these conclusions a year ago. Given our political immaturity, political lines for most DMLC cadre took a while to be consolidated and recognized. Furthermore, subjectivism--manifested in tears, anger, and distortions--set up roadblocks to combatting liberalism, as did an opposing consolidated petit bourgeois line that held official leadership during the last year. This leadership identified liberalism as a problem in the abstract, but refused to aid the struggle against it in most concrete situations.

Coming out of the struggle, we have several conclusions to share with our comrades:

1. The danger of petit bourgeois ideology and its hold on our movement are real. At the point when we fail to recognize and struggle against idealist methods of analysis, we have begun to lay the basis for opportunism, both left and right. This struggle would be much easier if it were merely a matter of separating and purging the "petit bourgeois people" from the "proletarian people." But life is not so simple as that. We are trying to isolate ideas, not people; we are not so static as to think that petit bourgeois errors can't under the right conditions be corrected, or that those who have taken a more materialist position in one situation can't also make petit bourgeois idealist errors in another. Therefore, the struggle for proletarian ideology must be an on-going, conscious, and objective process which takes place within the framework of (not preceding or apart from) the development of revolutionary organizations to which we are accountable.

2. In the absence of any strong ideological center and national political leadership, the struggle against petit bourgeois tendencies becomes much harder. Local collectives are thrown back on their own limited theoretical perspective and practical experience to deal with problems that are in fact much larger in scope. Under these conditions, idealism can more easily flourish. We really need to work toward the point when that national leadership and perspective can become a reality.

3. The need for strong, clearly internalized principles of unity is apparent, for without them it is impossible to build a solid proletarian organization. However, we wouldn't want to make the error of concluding then, that we should have simply studied and struggled over our principles of unity and M-L classics before engaging in collective practice and making ourselves accountable to each other. It was only in the process of trying to develop, test out, and evaluate our line collectively in the real world that we could begin to give life to, and recognize differences in interpretation of, those paper principles.