

THE GUARDIAN SUSTAINER

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Guardian staff view of a complicated political struggle

The Guardian, Silber and the Clubs

An extremely complicated political struggle erupted at the Guardian between September 1978 and spring 1979. One outgrowth of the struggle was the dismissal in June of Irwin Silber from the Guardian. Another was the dissolution of Guardian Clubs in January and the formation of the National Network of Marxist-Leninist Clubs (NNMLC), under Silber's direction, in March.

The purpose of this special issue of the Guardian Sustainer is to sum up this struggle for the benefit of our Sustainers and other friends, particularly since misleading accounts of this situation have been ventilated for months throughout the Marxist-Leninist movement by Silber and the NNMLC.

These accounts, in part, have depicted the Guardian newspaper and its staff as anti-Marxist, sectarian, hegemonistic, petty-bourgeois, backward and racist. These charges constitute the most slanderous attacks ever directed at the paper.

This account should be read as the first of two parts. The second article, which will be published in the Guardian itself in a few months, will bring the Guardian's position on party-building up to date on the basis of several months of internal education and discussion. A number of political differences involved in the recent struggle will be explored more fully in that second part.

Much of this article will document the chronology of the struggle and the manner in which Silber chose to put forward his differences because the deceptive form he adopted became an important element in the struggle and its resolution. Political differences are primary, of course, but by the time Silber revealed his genuine position before the Guardian staff, the form in which he carried out the struggle, which bred distrust, had become an important factor.

This Guardian Sustainer issue is available to general readers on request and copies will also be sent to various party-building groups and selected left organizations and individuals.

Our intention here is not to reply in kind to the sectarian charges against the Guardian but to set straight a record and to distill some lessons from this struggle which may be of some use to the left in general and the party-building movement in particular.

One of the principal aspects of this struggle concerned the question of party-building line. The Guardian was in the beginning stages of developing a line collectively when the struggle broke out and is just now able to return to this process.

The essence of the dispute between the Guardian and Silber had to do with the question of Guardian Clubs, a small organization the Guardian formed in a half-dozen cities in late 1977.

The Guardian viewed the purpose of the Clubs as a limited expression of the Guardian's independent Marxist-Leninist political line. The Clubs were intended to perform Guardian support work, engage in unified study, participate in some mass

work and to play—at least in the beginning stages—a very modest role in party-building.

The first year of the Clubs was experimental, to determine whether the Guardian could successfully form such a limited organization. In following years, the Clubs were to develop according to objective and subjective conditions to be assessed each step of the way. All that was absolutely certain was the belief that a limited political formation aligned with the Guardian's political views could play a constructive role both for the Guardian and for the left and party-building movements.

Although initially appearing to be in agreement with the purpose of the Clubs—so much so that the Guardian's elected Coordinating Committee (CC) named him chairperson of the Clubs—Silber's views about the future of the Clubs changed drastically in a relatively brief time. As opposed to limited expressions of the Guardian's political line, Silber developed the idea that they should become a nationwide party-building organization politically dedicated almost exclusively to the task of rectifying the general line of the communist movement and reestablishing a Communist Party.

The heart of this concept is a party-building strategy that calls for forming a "leading center" of individual Marxists, not bound or accountable to organizational disciplines, who would define the "correct" political line for the antirevisionist, antidogmatist movement based largely on theoretical study and then organize a vanguard party around themselves (or "from the center out," which in this case amounts to the same thing). Silber came to oppose the vision of Guardian Clubs organized around the Guardian's political line.

In the Guardian's view, rectification, reestablishment and a "leading center" deserve investigation within the party-building movement, although our initial analysis is critical. The split between the Guardian and Silber revolved around this political issue—to continue with Guardian Clubs as limited expressions of the paper's politics with an open mind at this stage on the various party-building lines or to convert them into a formation that would put forward a specific prescription for building a new party based on an idea about which the Guardian and the rest of the party-building movement have expressed doubt.

This is a key question for our movement. Upholding as we do that the principal task for Marxist-Leninists today is to form the party of the proletariat—and rejecting the various parties characterized by revisionism, dogmatism and Trotskyism—the strategy by which the movement forms the party is almost as important as the political line around which the participants in this process unite in the party formation stage. This is particularly crucial because the Guardian maintains, in common with most party-building forces, that only one party must emerge from this process, not two, three or four as in the past when

To our Sustainers

We have completely changed the format of this issue of the Guardian Sustainer to accommodate our lengthy report on our dismissal of Irwin Silber and the dissolution of Guardian Clubs. Please note that our pledge coupon is on page 7. The next issue of the Guardian Sustainer Newsletter, in the usual format, will appear quite shortly. It will contain an analysis of our recent Sustainer poll about making improvements in the Guardian.

movements formed against the revisionist degeneration of the Communist Party.

The Guardian is committed to making a contribution to building a new part of the working class. At this point, along with many other sections of the movement, the Guardian's party-building line is in the process of development. This process is not only the product of our own thinking but of interaction with other forces in the movement.

Premature adherence to a particular strategy before conducting a full analysis or taking into account the concrete realities of the party-building movement and objective and subjective conditions could do damage to the principal task of forming the new party. Guardian Clubs as limited expressions of the paper's line were not in contradiction to the process of building a party out of the movement as a whole.

Silber's attempt to force the Guardian to change the nature of the Clubs into a specific party-building organization would, in the Guardian's opinion, have had negative consequences, particularly because of the influence of such an organization receiving the Guardian's total support.

Silber ultimately judged the Guardian as a Marxist-Leninist entity on the basis of whether or not Guardian Clubs would be permitted to evolve in the direction he demanded. This helps explain the bitter attacks against the Guardian by the NNMLC under Silber's direction.

Another major reason the conflict between Silber and the Guardian became so intense was because Silber himself went through a number of major political transformations which he did not openly reveal to his comrades in the Guardian. For several years, it was impossible to know with any certainty what his real views were in this matter.

Silber has lately sought to depict the struggle as being between himself and Guardian editor Jack A. Smith, with whom Silber functioned as the paper's coleader from 1973 to 1978. This view is completely incorrect. A great many Guardian staff people played a significant role in the struggle with Silber, and the overwhelming majority was united and active in opposition to Silber's line. It was not a struggle between the paper's two

elected leaders, as Silber alleges, but a struggle between Silber and some of his closest associates in the Guardian Clubs and the Guardian staff over the question of which kind of intervention the Guardian was to make in the party-building process. Far from being pawns in this struggle, the Guardian staff collectively led the struggle.

Silber's line transformations during this period were considerable. In early 1977, he was arguing for the Guardian to call for the creation of democratic-centralist preparatory forms in various regions throughout the U.S. under a vague Guardian "umbrella." From this position he gravitated to the notion that democratic-centralist organizations in the preparatory period "freeze ideological struggle" and are inherently sectarian. During the same period he switched from placing primary emphasis on the idea of "uniting Marxist-Leninists" around political line to "theory is primary" to rectification, reestablishment and "leading center."

In another instance, Silber gravitated in one year from a position favoring building a small political organization around the paper's line to arguing that this was sectarian and divisive and that the Clubs should not adopt the Guardian's political line as a point of departure for contributing to the development of a movement-wide line.

Most of these line changes took place while Silber was chairperson of Guardian Clubs from September 1977 to September 1978. We now know that Silber discussed his changing views with many individuals and organizations within the party-building movement, but he never revealed them to his comrades until last September. Only after the Guardian—with Silber's full participation and endorsement—put its view forward on the state of the party-building movement in July 1978 did he publicly disclose his opposition to these views and to his own expressed earlier position. He did so without any serious attempt to criticize his previous line (which he now implies he never held) or the deceptive form of his struggle.

And even when Silber finally expressed his opposition he did not do so candidly. He alleged until the last that the notion of a "leading center" as the key to party-building was not his position. Soon after the Club network was dissolved and reformed as the NNMLC with Silber at the head, the organization put forward the same strategy the Guardian assumed—but never knew for certain—he was advocating all along but which he denied.

In tracing the history of the Guardian struggle with Silber, we should return very briefly to the early 1970s and the "new communist movement," the final phase of the antirevisionist movement before it consolidated into dogmatism.

The Guardian was very active in this period in advocating the development of an antirevisionist Communist Party and sought, perhaps naively, to effect some sort of unity among the various groups that constituted this movement. Time and again, however, the Guardian was hamstrung because it was "only a newspaper" with no organizational backing. "Who have you won to your line?" was a question not infrequently posed if the paper called for unity or began to raise questions about dogmatism.

Ultimately, several organizations announced themselves "vanguard parties" in the mid-1970s and a major section of the antirevisionist movement in general lapsed into dogmatism and ultra-"leftism." This manifested itself most clearly in its wholesale adoption of China's "three world's theory" and the thesis that the Soviet Union, not U.S. imperialism, is the main danger to the world's people. The Guardian itself began to develop a critique around new elements in China's international line and eventually no longer considered itself part of what was historically known as the "new communist movement."

But just as the antirevisionist movement arose in response to the degeneration of the Communist Party, an antirevisionist, antidogmatist movement

Continued on next page

The purloined Sustainer list

A copy of the Sustainer mailing list—which has always been the Guardian's most closely held and protected possession—is apparently in the hands of the National Network of Marxist-Leninist Clubs (NNMLC).

We learned of the theft of this list just a month ago when Sustainers all over the country reported having received a petition from the Bay Area calling for the reinstatement of Irwin Silber, NNMLC chairperson.

While geographic sections of the list were made available to the former Guardian Clubs for purposes of promoting local Guardian-related events, the complete list was never permitted outside our office. At the time of the separation of the Clubs from the Guardian in January, the Guardian asked for the return of all copies of such lists the Clubs had in their possession, and the NNMLC claimed to have complied with this request.

Apparently, however, the complete Sustainer list was taken from the Guardian office and given to the NNMLC. We suspect the list was taken by a former staff member now associated with the NNMLC.

Recipients of the Bay Area petition should also be advised of certain deceptions in its presentation. The signers are identified only as "members of various Guardian bureaus and other contributors and supporters of the Guardian," but the petition neglects to mention that at least 27 of the 30 initial signers are NNMLC members.

In addition, neither the Seattle nor New York signers have undertaken bureau work in the last year; the Ohio signers have lived in New York for a year without participating in the bureau, and the Bay Area Bureau dissolved itself a week before using official Guardian Bureau envelopes to mail the petition.

We have just received the completed petition in the mail. Out of a mailing to Sustainers and other Guardian readers, the organizers of this campaign garnered only 56 additional signatures to the "reinstatement Silber" drive. We trust that the history of the Guardian's relationship with Silber outlined in this Sustainer newsletter provides a sufficient explanation for our refusal to comply with this demand.

The question of fraudulent representation aside, the theft of the Sustainer list and its use by the NNMLC to alienate supporters of the Guardian, ask for contributions and, presumably, solicit subscriptions to its own forthcoming publication, is an extremely serious matter.

We offer Sustainers our apologies, and encourage you to join with us in condemning the use of such unprincipled tactics in political struggles on the left.

developed in response to the "left" errors of the antirevisionist movement. The Guardian identifies with the new movement today and has made a few contributions to its growth.

From the very beginning some Guardian staff people were conscious of the need to "win some people" to the paper's views organizationally so that the Guardian's positive ideas—among them the need to fight sectarianism and to guard against rightist errors in reaction to the "left" errors of the new communist movement—would not be swept aside in this new movement as before. The idea of forming Guardian Clubs was informally introduced a couple of times during this phase but the thought was not pursued.

By 1976 it was clear that the antirevisionist, antidogmatist movement, though small, was an important political tendency in formation.

MAY 1976

In May, Silber proposed to the Guardian staff that "the conditions exist for a significant initiative in the party-building process." He advocated that the paper view party-building as its "top priority" and publish a lengthy special supplement to put forward a set of political line proposals which could unite Marxist-Leninists of the antirevisionist, antidogmatist tendency.

Furthermore, he argued, since "the major problem is that the overwhelming majority of independent Marxist-Leninists are not organized in democratic centralist M-L organizations, the Guardian should call for the formation of M-L organizing committees (MLOCs) in every major city in the country." The Guardian was to serve as "informal coordinator" of this process and was to "print a 4-page weekly supplement which would be devoted to an exchange of views among these groups aimed at developing greater unity and clarity on questions." At the end of about two years, according to Silber's proposal, "there might be 50 such groups and the very real possibility of bringing into being a unified, national preparty organization."

This was an ambitious and difficult proposal, involving the Guardian newspaper in developing a national, democratic-centralist preparty political organization. While recognizing the importance of taking some initiative in the new movement, the CC also expressed reservations about the scope of Silber's plan and discussion went on for months within the leadership body.

OCTOBER 1976

Five months after Silber's initial recommendation, editor Jack A. Smith formally proposed to the CC that the Guardian view internal political and administrative reorganization and development of some practical political experience "top priority" before launching a party-building initiative of this calibre. At the time the paper's staff was characterized by sharply varying levels of political consciousness, the result of staff changes following recent splits with the new communist movement. And aside from the actual politics and production of the newspaper itself, the Guardian internal organization was in disarray and not doing adequate work in circulation, promotion, fund-raising, advertising and events and was in grave financial trouble.

"First things first," Smith wrote. "If we are going to make any dent at all in party-building we have to get our own house in order. . . . How much confidence can we have that we can handle big problems (forming MLOCs leading to a national pre-party organization) if we have failed to solve small problems? . . . The tasks we're setting for ourselves are far greater now than ever before and unless we're kidding ourselves we simply can't expect to play a big political role while basing ourselves upon such a primitive foundation. The superstructure of our intentions and goals—while comparable, I believe, with our political sophistication—is way too large for our base of organization and administrative abilities, judging by our practice and not our rhetoric. True, we put out a good newspaper from that weak base, but this is a quite different matter" from intervening in the party-building movement to the extent Silber was advocating.

Smith argued that the Guardian must first develop itself politically, organizationally and administratively to eliminate its extreme internal problems, and then, as an experiment, to gain practical political experience and give concrete expression to the paper's line, to gradually and carefully form small, 10-member Guardian Clubs in six or 12 cities that would be "political expressions" of the paper.

"When we were satisfied that our organization was in good shape; that our internal organizational and administrative problems were solved or on the way to solution; when our political line sharpened; when our financial base was made more stable; when we had done some actual organizing of clubs and had some practical experience in mass struggles and working-class organizing, then we should intervene most strongly in party-building. . . . There's a right way and a wrong way for us to advance. . . . The wrong way is for us to get deeply involved in party

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building when we can't organize ourselves out of a paper bag." Smith wrote.

The lure of making a bigger, immediate political contribution (on the basis of our success with the newspaper) overcame a true appreciation of the very practical problems, political contradictions and lack of experience that hampered the paper at the time in this regard. The CC adopted Silber's idea of publishing an 8-page special supplement containing a series of unity principles intended "to provide a basis for communists forming local democratic-centralist organizations."

MARCH 1977

The process of developing the unity principles (we finally put forward 29 of them) took longer than anticipated and the question of the advisability of forming MLOCs continued to surface. In March 1977, after the staff decided to go ahead with Silber's proposal but four months before the supplement was published, Smith again introduced the idea of forming experimental Guardian Clubs to test some of the Guardian's political theories in practice and win some people to them before undertaking—if ever—to preside over the formation of a sophisticated network of democratic-centralist MLOCs which would lead to a party. This time he did so in conjunction with the idea of publishing unity principles and dropped references to politically and administratively reorganizing the Guardian itself, since the CC could not unite on this point.

"The idea [of experimental clubs] is more relevant now than before for several reasons," Smith wrote. He argued that the Guardian's political line had attracted a relatively wide following, the "new communist movement" was becoming isolated and that some of the other political organizations with the antirevisionist, antidogmatist movement had right opportunist tendencies. The formation of "semi-formal" political clubs around the Guardian's political line "will maximize our contribution to the party-building movement. . . . As the Clubs developed, they could graduate to a higher form of organization."

The thinking behind this proposal was that such limited political organizations would help to develop the Guardian politically and organizationally, test some of the Guardian's ideas in a practical way and conduct principled political struggle within the entire movement so that the paper could demonstrate that it could win people to its political line and to put forward this line organizationally as well as in its pages.

As it was becoming evident that the idea of calling for the formation of MLOCs was unrealistic, the CC unanimously accepted the new proposal that the party-building supplement call for the creation of a very limited number of Guardian Clubs which "would constitute the specific organizational expression of the Guardian's political ideas." One hundred members the first year and perhaps a few hundred more after that, organized around the paper's line, was the extent of the proposal for the first several years—assuming they survived the first year. Movement critics of the Clubs proposal at the time grossly overestimated the Guardian's intentions and abilities, not to mention misunderstanding the real purpose of the Clubs.

Soon after, Silber abruptly dropped the idea of MLOCs, which had been downplayed but not eliminated by the call for forming Clubs. "We are not prepared to give this process leadership or even guidance except in the most general way," he wrote. "This means that these local groups are more likely to come under the hegemony of PWOC [Philadelphia Workers Organizing Committee] than any other political force." He also endorsed the idea, which he was previously cool to, of experimental Guardian Clubs formed around the 29 unity principles to be published in the supplement.

"As a means of developing the Guardian's own organizational base," Silber said, the supplement should announce "we are planning to establish a network of Guardian Clubs whose principal function will be to build the Guardian and propagate its political line based on the principles of unity. These Guardian Clubs may be able at some future time to also play an organizational role in the creation of a party, but this must await future developments."

JUNE 1977

The Guardian staff was united when the supplement, largely drafted by Silber, was published in June 1977. The main thrust was "uniting

Marxist-Leninists around political line" and the 29 points were viewed as a contribution to this line, not the line for a party itself. The Club idea was introduced in the organizational section of the document in these words: "The Clubs would be an organizational vehicle for helping to develop a distinct political trend within the Marxist-Leninist movement, a trend based on the 29 principles of unity."

(We have gone into some length regarding the origins of the Guardian Clubs because in just one year after the supplement was published, Silber and some leading members of the Club network associated with him were claiming that the concept of the Clubs as a limited organizational expression of the paper's political ideas—the very basis upon which they were founded—was a "new" idea being undemocratically "shoved down the throats of" Club members.)

Soon after the party-building supplement with its 29 principles of unity was published in June 1977, the Guardian CC began to work out plans as to how the Clubs would be organized. At Smith's recommendation, Silber was named Club chairman to be assisted by a part-time Club coordinator from the staff and the staff's Club Subcommittee, the members of which were named by Silber. It was agreed the Clubs would have three main functions: Guardian support work; party-building work—mainly theoretical study—and local political activities. At Smith's suggestion it was agreed also that the Clubs would be organized around 10 general principles of unity, not the 29 points, using the first experimental year to conduct study programs to raise the level of unity to that of the Guardian's 29 points.

When these structures were organized, the Guardian CC did a foolish thing. It basically entrusted the entire project to Silber and turned its attention elsewhere. (In defense of the CC, it had no idea Silber's line would change so markedly or that he would not operate openly. Well over a year later, after the Clubs were dissolved, the Guardian obtained a copy of a "secret" letter Silber sent to PWOC in February 1979. In it he revealed that he struggled against the idea of forming an organizational expression of the Guardian politics from the beginning. In the beginning stages this was not true, as far as we know. It became known subsequently that soon after he became chairman of the Clubs he began to subvert them from their original purpose.)

NOVEMBER 1977

The idea of "rectification and reestablishment" of the communist party was first presented in the Guardian in the form of a Radical Forum submitted by a member of a West Coast club in November 1977. At the time the Guardian staff made serious criticism of the article's overemphasis on theoretical work at the expense of and in separation from political and organizational tasks. Silber, as Club chairman, was charged with investigating a possible political difference between the Guardian and the article's author—but he reported that none existed and that the staff had merely "misunderstood" the article's thrust.

By December 1977 a vague malaise about the direction of the Clubs began to overtake members of the Club Subcommittee, which Silber headed. The only identifiable conflict with Silber at that point was over the nature of the study guide for Club members around the Guardian's 29 points. Committee members felt Silber—whose initial draft of the guide consisted almost entirely of a collection of his own columns—was elevating the role of developing new theoretical perspectives too high and downplaying the task of organizing Club members around the Guardian's political line and some practical tasks. But it was too early to draw out two political lines on this question, especially since there was no evidence of disunity on Silber's part.

Compounding the problem, co-leader Smith became extremely ill and remained in this condition for months.

FEBRUARY 1978

Around this time, members of the antirevisionist, antidogmatist party-building movement were looking toward Detroit, where a conference was scheduled in February called by a group of Marxist-Leninist organizations led by PWOC to create an Organizing Committee for an Ideological Center (OCIC).

The Guardian had participated to an extent over the past years with the "committee of five"—a grouping of five antirevisionist, antidogmatist

local party-building organizations—which called the conference. But because of some political differences it did not intend to become a member of the OCIC at that point. Silber proposed to the CC that the Clubs join the OCIC regional committees that were to be formed in Detroit. At CC member Karen Gellen's initiative, the proposal was rejected and Silber was instructed to attend the conference as an observer and to keep a relatively low profile of critical support without voting.

Despite this mandate, Silber played a significant role at the conference, arguing and voting for the proposal to found the OCIC and for the adoption of its 18 principles of unity, with which the Guardian had already identified some serious disagreements and reservations. Silber was sharply criticized by the CC and staff when he returned from Detroit—but again excused his action by claiming he had "misunderstood" the CC directive.

(A year later, in the letter to PWOC previously mentioned, Silber boasted of the "actual role" he played in Detroit—as opposed to his assigned role as the Guardian's representative—as evidence of his disagreement with and struggle against the Guardian's line, which by that time he characterized as "opportunist.")

This incident served to deepen the distrust of Silber's real intentions among the staff. It was thought at the time Silber secretly wanted the Guardian as well as the Clubs to join the OCIC—but he soon after turned strongly against aligning with the OCIC. The Detroit episode spurred a decision to summarize the Guardian's political differences with the OCIC and publish its reasons for not joining the formation as soon as possible.

Also around this time, Smith, who was still at home near the end of his recuperation, was urged by a number of leading staff members to take a more active role in the Clubs Subcommittee. Concerned about the possibility of hidden political differences with Silber, Smith drafted a paper outlining some of his own views on party-building in order to bring any disagreements into the open for debate.

This paper put forward the position that the antirevisionist, antidogmatist movement in formation was a fourth political tendency in the U.S. (after the consolidation of the revisionist, Trotskyist and dogmatist movements) as opposed to being just a trend within the general antirevisionist movement, which by then was mired in terminal "left" opportunism. The paper argued that the PWOC-OCIC view that the main danger in our movement came from "left" opportunism was a mistake. It forcefully stated that the main danger among antirevisionist, antidogmatist forces was right opportunism or the resurgence of revisionism.

The paper also argued that several trends or currents will develop within this new movement and that the Guardian should not join the OCIC current at this stage; that it should take some time to assess the situation. It also reaffirmed "we must build Guardian Clubs into a serious organizational expression of our political line" and that the Clubs should be viewed as a political current in their own right—a reiteration of the Guardian's original views and a recognition of the right opportunist danger.

Silber's only comment was that he agreed with "90%" of the paper—never identifying his "10%" disagreement. (A year later, in his political report to the founding conference of the NNMLC, Silber referred to Smith's paper as the "first surfac(ing)" of the "opportunist position"—without providing an explanation for either why he agreed with "90%" of the document at the time or why he never chose to bring his disagreements into the open within the Guardian at the time.)

MARCH 1978

Beginning in March 1978, however, rumors kept coming back to the Guardian from different cities that there was "a big split" in the Guardian over party-building. No political differences that could constitute such a "split" had been brought up within the staff. When some of the rumors referring to a split between the coleaders were tracked down to intimate members of Silber's circle he was directly asked what he knew about the "big split." He claimed ignorance of the rumors and asserted there was "no split that I know of."

It is now obvious that Silber himself, then the Guardian's executive editor, was telling political associates off the staff that he had major disagreements with the paper's line on the Clubs—but did not bring this up for examination within the paper. Had he done so the Guardian believes there would have been a way to resolve differences creatively after prolonged and comradely struggle.

A test on whether there was a "big split" came around the time the rumors were circulating. Recognizing the Guardian's political obligation to put forward its reasons for not joining the OCIC, especially in view of the confusion caused by Silber's misconduct in Detroit, the CC scheduled a staffwide discussion on the state of the party-building movement.

Silber wrote the first draft for this discussion. His document put forward the political basis for the Guardian's decision not to join the OC. By now Silber was clearly joining the formation, a position he still holds despite having rejected the importance of political differences within the antirevisionist, antidogmatist movement except for those on party-building line.

In its discussions, the staff accepted some additions from Smith's paper and from a number of other staff members. The staffwide discussion lasted several weeks and concluded on a note of total unity, including Silber, who raised no criticisms of the final document.

JULY 1978

In a key section, the paper, entitled "The State of the Party-Building Movement—July 1978," stated: "We will proceed with our own organizational efforts—concretely, to build, expand and consolidate the Guardian trend on the basis of the political line summed up by the Guardian and as a means of giving that line a firm organizational expression, principally through the Guardian Clubs."

Finally, there was proof positive that there was "no big split" as the rumors had it; that Silber, despite stretching the staff mandate in Detroit, still adhered to it; that a lot of the fears about Silber's "hidden agenda" were groundless.

Before publishing the document in the paper the staff had recommended that copies be circulated for several weeks to the Guardian Clubs and OCIC constituent groups for criticism and suggestions. (In hindsight, we recognize that it was a mistake to send the document to OCIC groups before criticisms and suggestions were incorporated from the Clubs.)

The Guardian expected criticism from the OCIC. This would be viewed as a good thing, since it would sharpen the ideological struggle within the movement. But the staff had no way of anticipating that the Clubs would be up in arms and that Silber would soon perform a complete flip-flop, join with the Clubs and take leadership of their struggle to change a Guardian position taken before the Clubs were formed.

Silber was in intimate touch with the Clubs and had taken prolonged trips to visit with the Club network and engaged in lengthy discussion with them about party-building and the future of the Club system for a year. Yet he did not express one word to the Guardian during the course of its discussion on the party-building paper that the Clubs would be anything but pleased by the paper's initiative. As Club chairman, the staff had relied on Silber to give the Guardian the benefit of Club views.

Actually, the little response heard from the Clubs in the first six weeks after they received the document was basically positive. During this time the Club Subcommittee began a series of meetings to discuss how to proceed with building, expanding and consolidating the Clubs as an organizational expression of the Guardian's line in their second year.

Recognizing that a number of problems that had arisen during the first year due to the Guardian's organizational inexperience and inadequate leadership from the center, the Subcommittee viewed the first year as generally positive and recommended that 1979 become "the year of broadening and deepening the Clubs," lifting membership restrictions, putting forward the 29 points of unity principles, hiring a full-time organizer and setting out to "build the Clubs into a serious national organization, gradually but steadily until what we have termed the 'Guardian trend' within the party-building movement adopts significant concrete form."

Scores of "build-the-Clubs" ideas were exchanged during these meetings. The Subcommittee anticipated that some Club members might drop out if the unity principles were expanded to 29 and that some Club members from the informally organized first year "may not be prepared to move this far with us." But the Guardian believed the great majority of Club members was anxious to move to a higher organizational form with the Guardian and were willing to take some initial membership losses as part of this process of advancement. Silber raised no reservations during these discussions.

AUGUST 1978

In early August last year Smith was asked to draw up a first summary draft "Proposal on the Future of Guardian Clubs" on the basis of these preliminary talks. Standard Guardian procedure is for subcommittees to draw up drafts, submit the final version to the CC for approval and changes and then submit the document to the staff for discussion. In this case, the document was also earmarked for the Clubs because—as opposed to the Guardian's views on the OCIC or other political line questions—Club members were to be encouraged to fully participate in the development of a final plan for the second year since it had to do with the Clubs themselves. It also had been planned the Clubs would participate in the coming discussion on party-building line.

Initial response to the "State of the Party-Building Movement" from the Clubs was limited to minor criticisms. By the end of August 1978, however, a number of leading Club members had circulated major criticisms about the Guardian's general plan for the Clubs, definition of the Guardian as a left trend and its alleged "Fusionist-Federationist" approach. Silber still had not made his line reversal public, but the Guardian assumes he coordinated the timing of his opposition with his collaborators within the network.

Silber revealed his strong opposition to the "State of the Party-Building Movement" document Aug. 30 to the Clubs Subcommittee. His critique, in the form of a response to Smith's first draft summary of the subcommittee's discussions on the future of Guardian Clubs, fell like a ton of bricks on the Guardian. From the first sentence to the last, Silber ripped apart the idea of forming a limited political organization around the Guardian line, accusing the Guardian staff of reserving to itself the right of formulating the general line of the party and of seeking to gain seats on the central committee. He scoffed at the idea that

to hasten the development of uniting Marxist-Leninists around a political line in order to contribute toward the building of a new communist party. Theoretical tasks may be a principal task for the party-building movement—but it was not the reason Guardian Clubs were formed."

And in the very last sentence, Silber sought to justify his 180 degree turn by chastening the Guardian for "what I fear has all too often been a pattern of compromising differences before they have been fully explored and struggled over." In other words, the rather embarrassing contretemps the Guardian was now in—with a party-building document circulating throughout the movement and Club network while the paper's coleader now was guiding the opposition to it in the Clubs—was due to the staff's penchant for "compromising differences."

So there apparently was a "hidden agenda" after all, just as most staff members thought for many months—but it was hardly the result of "compromising differences." It was the result of concealing differences until sufficient support could be generated within the Clubs to back Sil-

At no time did Silber engage in any struggle about the Guardian's plan for building such a limited political organization until September 1978 when he launched charges of sectarianism and "hegemonism" in a manner and situation hardly conducive to creative dialog.

He confined his broadsides largely to the "implications" of the idea, which he evidently believed shared some assumptions with the "fusion" and "federationist" aspects of the very OCIC-PWOC proposals he in particular led the Guardian in criticizing. While it is correct to draw out the "implications" in various political positions, Silber did so in a way to distort the issues involved and to raise unsupportable charges.

It became clear at this point that Silber's principal critique of the OCIC was its party-building line, while the critique of other leading staff members centered largely on the OCIC's political line. In particular, the Guardian had a number of questions about the OCIC insistence that the main danger within our movement was "left" opportunism and its position on international line which correctly identified U.S. imperialism as the principal danger to the peoples of the world but did not mention Soviet hegemonism as a secondary contradiction.

By identifying these political errors and giving them added weight by not joining the OCIC at the time, and by continuing to build Guardian Clubs along strict antirevisionist as well as antidogmatist political lines, the Guardian hoped to be able to influence the organizations within the OCIC to fight their own tendencies toward right opportunism while conducting the necessary struggle against the "left" opportunism of the new communist movement.

The Guardian made quite clear in its original paper on the "State of the Party-Building Movement" and in the form it was finally published in the paper in October that it did not consider its differences with the OCIC to be consolidated and looked forward to higher levels of unity with the OCIC and all groups within the movement as the necessary struggle over political line unfolded.

It was the paper's view that the OCIC political errors were best addressed now rather than cover them over and be confronted with a far more difficult political situation later. Our objective was to develop political unity and the Clubs were to become a concrete expression of the struggle which would forge such unity.

The Guardian was roundly criticized by both Silber and the OCIC for arguing that a number of trends or currents would develop within the movement in the coming period and that, at the stage in question, two such currents existed, Guardian and OCIC, based on differences in political line. Both these currents were the only formations to have put forward developed principles of political unity to which they adhered and on the basis of an analysis of both documents the Guardian concluded that the OCIC's line placed it on the right of the spectrum within the movement. It was also made clear the Guardian did not view these political contradictions as antagonistic. Far from seeking a permanent division in our movement—as was charged—the objective of raising sharp questions around political line differences was intended to prevent an eventual split once lines were consolidated in higher organizational form.

Silber used the issue of the Guardian being "sectarian and hegemonistic" in relation to some of its political line criticisms but the real question seems in retrospect to have been party-building strategy. To Silber, and now the NNMLC (which has likewise refused to join the OCIC), the principal difference is over party-building line, not political line. The Guardian believes political line determines everything. Secondly, the Guardian has not yet come to a developed position on party-building strategy and it believes Silber's critique of the PWOC-OCIC party-building position is too sweeping.

OCTOBER 1978

The Guardian staff conducted two prolonged meetings Sept. 25 and Oct. 2 last year to discuss some criticisms of the "State of the Party-Building Movement" document that had arrived from Club members but primarily to struggle with Silber over his new position, which was not at all clear or explicit to staff members. The purpose of the meetings was to offer amendments to the original document before publishing it in the paper.

One of the key items under discussion during these meetings was a position paper from two members of the Bay Area Club, which, among other points, discovered that "Nowhere is it mentioned that the essence of the actual process of forging the party involves creating a leading center which is united on a leading line—a center which must transcend any existing organizational form. It is this leading center—which will certainly be made up of individual Marxist-Leninists who are now in a variety of organizations or trends within the genuine M-L tendency—which

Continued on next page

Guardian
SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT
JUNE 1977, 20¢

On building the new communist party



Firm in our commitment to the fundamental principles of scientific socialism, staunch in our opposition to revisionism and opportunism, confident in the revolutionary capacity of the U.S. working class and oppressed nationalities, united in our hatred of the U.S. monopoly bourgeoisie and its imperialist system, we call on all U.S. Marxist-Leninists to help move the party-building process forward by deepening the necessary ideological discussions and starting to solve the problems of organization—the Guardian

within the party-building movement the Guardian represented a trend distinct from the OCIC on the basis of its 29 points. He accused that great majority whose line didn't change that year of being sectarian and hegemonistic. He proposed eliminating everything from the party-building document except the original critique of the errors of the OCIC.

In his very first sentence, Silber put forward a view of the Clubs that contradicted the position the Guardian held for a year and a half with no objection from him. "The underlying assumption of the original conception of Guardian Clubs was that in the present period the principal tasks before the party-building movement were theoretical tasks—in particular the task of rectifying the general line of the communist movement in the U.S. and formulating the essential features of a revolutionary general line that could unite U.S. Marxist-Leninists organizationally in party form."

While this is a legitimate view for debate, it had nothing to do with the "original conception" of Guardian Clubs. In a reply to Silber's bombshell, Smith wrote to the Clubs Subcommittee: "My impression was that the underlying assumption of the original conception of the Clubs was to build an organization around the Guardian which would help advance our Guardian trend within the independent party-building movement, to fight right opportunism within the movement and

ber's opposition to building a limited organization around the Guardian's line and instead guiding the organization toward becoming a party-building formation predicated on the rectification-reestablishment-leading center idea.

SEPTEMBER 1978

Interestingly, at this time Silber said to the staff his opposition was far more to the "implications" about the future role of the Clubs discussed in the Club Subcommittee than to any particular wording about the Clubs in the "State of the Party-Building Movement" paper. Yet publicly, Silber maintained, that our reference to the Clubs in the July 1978 paper was a major change from the founding statement, a change we were "ramming through without consultation" with Club members.

Responding to fears about the "implications" rather than the actual statement, the Guardian assured Silber that his views on the future of the Clubs and on the as-yet-to-be-developed Guardian party-building strategy would be listened to very carefully, along with those of the Club members. Silber was asked to withdraw his demand for a major revision in the document already circulating since it made no pretense of putting forward a concrete party-building strategy and the section pertaining to Guardian Clubs was simply a reiteration of our past line on building a limited political organization. Silber refused.

absolutely must be placed in the center of our vision of forging the party. Otherwise, party-building does become the process of existing organizations quantitatively developing their numbers and influence.

This is substantially the NNMLC line today. Even after he revealed his opposition to the Guardian's line, however, Silber still argued that the question of a "leading center" of individual Marxist-Leninists was not relevant to discussion and that he did not have a position on the proposal. A few months earlier, it was subsequently learned, Silber "as an individual" told a Midwest party-building group he was in basic agreement with the proposal.

Throughout the two staff discussions it was difficult to comprehend exactly what Silber was putting forward. Some errors were made in rebutting arguments which were not in fact Silber's true position but seemed to be because of the manner in which he elected to make his views known. Similarly, the Guardian erred in this period in dealing with some Club criticisms because the staff viewed much of the struggle as primarily an effort to refute Silber. Because of this, the paper reacted defensively at times against a perceived threat to the Guardian's political integrity and did not give sufficient attention to Club views, which it tended to lump together with Silber's.

The struggle was very complex at this point because it was being carried out on three different levels:

- For the Guardian, the staff saw itself caught in a political squeeze play. In demanding that the Guardian retract its paper on the state of the party-building movement, the Guardian was being told to withdraw a position developed before the Clubs were formed and with which the staff still agreed. The paper's right to develop its own line was construed to be in jeopardy. This feeling was strengthened when the Guardian proposed that its position would be for the "staff only," not the Clubs, and Silber and Club leaders rejected it. It then appeared certain Silber's group was demanding a voice in the political line and direction of the paper.

- Silber and leading Club members were arguing on the level of party-building strategy and saw the Guardian's minimal efforts to develop an organization as the first step toward a party-building strategy they disagreed with. Since most of this was based on "implications" that could not be confronted directly, their critique was extremely broad and sharp, demanding that the Guardian's entire reference to the role of the Clubs be deleted.

- For the average Club member, there was little appreciation of the depth of the antagonism that had developed between Silber and the Guardian, the extent to which the Guardian staff sought to protect its political decision-making ability from a takeover bid led by Silber and much misunderstanding of the Guardian's true position on the Clubs and party-building.

During the staff discussions, most of Silber's presentations were aimed at targets that the Guardian did not think seriously existed, such as allegations that the Guardian wanted to develop the Clubs into preparty organizations and possibly even the party itself, with no consideration being given to "the movement as a whole." The Guardian never entertained the idea of building a party but does not oppose the existence of consolidated organizations in the preparty period and did not rule out in principle the possibility that the Clubs might develop considerably in a number of years—though that was not on the foreseeable agenda and seemed hardly likely, even in the paper's most optimistic moments. Had Silber launched a serious discussion in the staff about the question of preparty organizations before our debate, his views would have received a hearing.

Silber's amendment to the "State of the Party-Building Movement" paper, supported by leading Club people, basically eliminated everything but the direct critique of the OCIC.

This was rejected, overwhelmingly by the Guardian staff, not only because it was wrong but also because the staff viewed the move as an attempt to provide the Clubs a voice in determining Guardian political policy before they agreed to form political unity with the paper (Silber now argued against the Clubs' adoption of the 29 points) and certain organizational responsibilities. In other words, once the Clubs and the Guardian were in political unity in the second year and once it was understood that Clubs were more than study groups with Guardian-support responsibilities (that they must as Clubs gain some actual organizational practice in political work), then it would be possible to develop avenues of political input into the Guardian.

The reasons for rejecting Silber's amendment were thus twofold: The Guardian staff, not recognizing the same "implications" that motivated Silber, could see nothing wrong in reaffirming its decision of a year earlier to develop an organization around the paper's line. Second, the attempt to provide the experimental Club network with a voice in Guardian political policy before there

was agreed political unity and agreement on organizational responsibilities (especially in the realm of political practice) was not acceptable.

At issue was whether the Clubs would be expressions of the Guardian's political line with some limited practical political tasks as well as study-group and party-building responsibilities or whether they would be party-building organizations tilting in the direction of the rectification-reestablishment—"leading center" idea.

Smith's amendment to the paper—basically strengthening the section about developing Guardian Clubs—was accepted by the same overwhelming margin by which Silber's was rejected. The amendments and formal arguments were published in full in the September-October issue of the Guardian Club Newsletter.

In a section giving the reasoning behind the majority positions, Smith wrote:

"During our discussions of the various Club papers last week it became apparent that two comrades on our staff [one other person supported Silber's amendment] now have disagreements with the decision—as expressed in the staff paper—that we should build, expand and consolidate the Guardian trend on the basis of the political line summed up by the Guardian as a means of giving that line a firm organizational expression, even though these disagreements were not brought forward at the time of our staff meetings two months ago. They now feel that to implement our decision to give firm organizational expression to our political line within the fourth tendency would be 'divisive' and virtually factionalist. These are sharp words.

"A number of other points emerged last week during our discussion that are worth noting. . . . One such point was a new theory advanced by comrade Irwin for the first time within our ranks to defeat the idea that the Clubs should be an organizational vehicle for helping to develop a



distinct political trend within the fourth tendency. This theory is that 'consolidated organizational forms are a mistake at this stage' and that such forms 'freeze' the process of developing a party-building strategy and indeed 'freeze' ideological struggle. It is not entirely clear what is meant by the term 'consolidated' but its usual definition means to strengthen or make solid, firm or coherent, as in 'to build, expand and consolidate the Guardian trend.'

"Precisely how this would be 'a mistake at this stage' or impede party-building strategy or ideological struggle is not revealed. Our view had been in the past, to my knowledge, that the strengthening of Guardian Clubs into a serious expression of the Guardian political line would advance Guardian strategy. . . . and would sharpen the ideological debate by demonstrating our ability to concretely win a number of Marxist-Leninists to our line in the form of an organizational commitment. . . . Far from fearing that a more mature Guardian Club system would 'freeze' the development of a party-building strategy within the [antirevisionist, antidogmatist] tendency, I suspect comrade Irwin is cautiously advancing a party-building strategy in contradiction to the Guardian's decision to 'consolidate the Guardian trend' [but was concealing the strategy by directing his barrage at the idea of forming a limited political organization around the paper's line instead of openly advocating making the Clubs a party-building form with theoretical tasks but not bound by political line].

"It was evident to the Guardian staff for the first time last week that comrade Irwin has considerable unity with the party-building views of [the two members of the Bay Area Club who advocated the 'leading center' approach quoted earlier]. . . .

"Such an idea was 'nowhere . . . mentioned' [in the Guardian document] because (a) we had never heard it before and because (b) had we heard it expressed we would have subjected it to criticism on many grounds, not the least being that it is untested, divorced from practical considerations, probably unworkable, elitist and removed from the concrete realities of political and organizational development within our tendency.

"But it is a party-building strategy. It appears to be based on the novel idea that all existing political organizations and those to come (i.e., any group which has tried to provide organizational form for its political views or which has sought to one degree or another to engage in political practice or win working people to its line) are to be excluded from participating in such a 'leading center.' Judging by comrade Irwin's comments later, the mere existence of political organizations constitutes a divisive and perhaps factionalist danger to be struggled against. This coincides with his statement last week that 'Marxist-Leninists do not need an organization to defeat incorrect lines.

"To place such a unique strategy for building a party 'absolutely . . . at the center of our vision of forging the party' is a mistake that stems from leaning almost entirely toward theory without reference to political practice. We can agree that there are periods in the development of revolutionary struggle when it is required to give principal emphasis to theoretical work. We can agree that an enormous amount of theoretical work must be done within our tendency. We can agree that rectifying the general line of the communist movement is an essential task.

"But can we seriously agree with an untested line which posits that the way to build a party is to win Marxist intellectuals to a vague 'leading center' which will presumably work out the strategy for building a party capable of taking power in the U.S., a self-defined 'leading center' which makes it a point of principle to ignore practical and organizational work so as not to disturb its deliberations? Who but a handful of people will ever subscribe to this?"

This argument did not rule out the "leading center" approach as one of several legitimate party-building strategies that should be examined further. It took exception to the notion that it was the strategy the Guardian and the movement should follow.

It should be noted that although the "leading center" idea rules out the participation of organizations in development of a general line for the movement as a whole, it is open to membership people who belong to organizations as long as in their "leading center" work they are not bound by organizational discipline. (An analysis of the Guardian's views on NNMLC's "leading center" strategy, based on our fuller understanding of the concept, will be published in our new document on the party-building movement.)

As soon as the issue was decided in these debates, plans were made to publish the statement as a "staff only position in the next issue of the Guardian, two months later than originally intended. Three days before the issue went to press, Silber unexpectedly submitted his resignation as executive editor (remaining on the staff) and from that point on took the open lead in directing the Club struggle against the Guardian, a struggle that by his own gloating written admission much later "broke all the rules and regulations established by the Guardian."

Silber's leadership of this struggle became the catalyst not for the planned discussion between the Guardian and the Clubs over future direction of the Club network and over party-building policy but for a demand that the Guardian publicly retract its statement that it intended to build Guardian Clubs into a limited political organization.

This demand was coupled with Silber's leadership of the Club rebellion against the Guardian while still a member of our staff and the divisive manner in which the Club leadership chose to conduct the struggle. The combination made it impossible for any serious dialogue to take place on the question of future Club direction and party-building strategy.

Silber's resignation threat, coming just before our all important series of 30th anniversary meetings, was intended to pressure the Guardian staff to reverse itself where his argumentation could not succeed. He was asked to delay announcement of his proposed resignation until after the meetings were over because it would, as he understood, create an impression of instability at a time when it was necessary for the Guardian to raise as much money as possible during the celebrations in order to keep publishing. He refused, and even demanded that the Guardian publish a column by him accusing the paper of sectarianism and considerably worse.

The Guardian, upholding its long-standing organizational rule that staff members are not to publicly criticize the paper—let alone use the paper to attack the paper—would not publish Silber's resignation column in the Guardian. It

did, however, publish the column in the Clubs Newsletter.

The November 1978 issue of the Guardian Clubs Newsletter contained Silber's column and a long article by him charging the Guardian with innumerable political transgressions. (These charges and many more have been circulated throughout the movement by Silber's circle since his resignation.)

The Guardian staff asked Smith to write a reply to Silber's charges and this, too, was published in the same newsletter. Commenting on Silber's belated opposition to forming an organizational expression of the Guardian's ideas and on his arguments that "consolidated" political organizations in the preparty stage were sectarian and prevented the development of movementwide line rectification, Smith said:

"I think this theory stems not only from an elitist and one-sided theoretical stand but from a misreading of history. Recognizing as we all do the sectarian mistakes of the 'new communist movement,' Silber has evidently concluded that the way to avoid such mistakes in our movement is to eliminate the role of organizations [in developing the general line for the movement]. In this he is making an error of seeking an organizational (or rather an antiorganizational) solution to what is in essence a political problem.

"Sectarianism is a political problem, not an organizational problem. Political organizations can push forward the party-building movement. They have in the past and will in future. They are not inherently sectarian and divisive. That certain political organizations have become sectarian and divisive is a fact, but the answer is not to oppose organization but to oppose sectarianism.

"The 2-line question before us is whether political organizations will or will not have an important role in developing a leading line for the antirevisionist, antidogmatist fourth tendency around which Marxist-Leninists can unite. Silber says no. The Guardian newspaper says yes. . . .

"Silber dismisses from consideration [in his article in the newsletter] the question of whether or not it is true or false that a 'leading center' of Marxist individuals 'absolutely must be placed in the center of our vision of forging a party' Silber says this idea 'may be good or bad or in between.' Well, is it good or bad or in between? This is but one of a score of examples the Guardian staff has accumulated where Silber is not being entirely candid about his own views." Some months later, Silber was publicly advocating the "leading center" idea.

Silber's article elaborating upon his resignation made much of the Guardian's use of the term "trend" to distinguish between the Guardian and PWOC, preferring to define it as meaning there were consolidated differences within our movement. The Guardian acknowledged at this point that its use of the term "trend" was unscientific and that it was intended in the sense of "current" or "direction," not a consolidated political formation. It explained that the mistake in the word "trend" by the groups that eventually joined the OCIC to define themselves. In the Silber-Guardian struggle it was repeated endlessly that the Guardian most certainly did not view itself as a consolidated political grouping within the movement that was bound to go its own way out of a sectarian desire to turn its back upon those within the tendency with whom it had certain political differences.

After explaining the way in which the Guardian meant the word "trend" to apply, Smith wrote:

"Political trends—[in the Guardian's meaning] different lines expressed in rather broad and distinct unity positions—in the preparty stage are not necessarily permanent. Trends develop, trends dissolve, trends split, trends merge, new trends form. Our struggle with the OCIC may be resolved in a relatively brief period or it may take longer.

"Many organizational forms develop in the preparty state—advanced political organizations guided by full democratic centralism; limited political organizations united around a distinct and relatively sophisticated set of principles and a form of organizational discipline, study groups, regional associations, federations, 'centers' of individuals [the 'leading center'] and so on.

"The main purpose of this entire process of political and organizational ferment, however, must be the formation of a single party when the political struggles are sorted out. The Guardian is committed to this. Not to experience these struggles, to bypass this stage, is to set in motion the development of a party that will contain within it so many contradictions that it's hard to see how it could hold together for long without splitting. Compounding this error would be to have a grouping of 'leading' Marxist-Leninists substitute themselves for the entire party-building process and develop the 'correct line' in isolation from existing organizations and practice."

One of the more interesting revelations in Silber's paper was his acknowledgement that many of the sectarian intentions he was attributing to the Guardian were on the basis of "implications" he perceived, not from any concrete deeds by the

Guardian. "Silber exposes the distorted nature of his arguments," Smith replied. "when he asks permission to 'anticipate one response' to his innuendos about the Guardian staff seeking hegemony in the party-building movement. 'Namely,' he continues, 'that none of what I have been describing has actually been proposed and that the Guardian staff is only planning to establish a 'limited' political organization' [as opposed to the full-blown democratic centralist preparty form he attributed to us].

"What kind of Marxist argument is this when Silber finally acknowledges that 'none of what I have been describing has actually been proposed' by the Guardian? He then tries to justify this indefensible technique by surmising that our intention is 'to stake out a claim on this process [of developing a party] in anticipation of the time when the organizational strength of each of these trends will determine not only the correct leading line for the tendency as a whole, but—and here organizational questions indeed come to the fore—the allocation of positions and designation of personalities to the Central Committee of the party.'

"Who ever said that 'organizational strength' will determine whether a line is correct or not?" Smith asked. "The Guardian has never hinted at such an absurdity. And the nonsense about seats on a Central Committee is a low political gesture."

In its concluding section, the rebuttal to Silber declared:

"Irwin Silber is concocting an elaborate ruse. He has made many, many charges but has provided very little substantiation aside from distorted innuendos and self-serving speculation. He's trying his best to make it appear his defeat in the Guardian staff is a big blow to the party-building movement, an entity for which he appears to substitute himself. He has slandered the Guardian's views and has drawn and promulgated implications that are dangerous not only to the Guardian but to the movement he, personally and one would think single-handedly, is seeking to protect from the barbarians. On another level, I find it disturbing that he has such a low opinion of the Guardian newspaper and for his fellow workers."

"It will take years to form the limited political organization we are talking about. We may succeed and this would push forward the party-building movement. We may not succeed, but there is no shame in that. At least we will have tried. In our view, it is our duty as Marxist-Leninists to make the attempt."

During those weeks some Club members had been very active in organizing opposition to the Guardian document within the network. Several now-prominent members of the NNMLC traveled across the country to attend other Club meetings and fan members' fears that the Guardian was attempting to "impose" a "new" line on the Clubs.

By November, position papers from majorities in each Club—each bearing striking resemblance to the charges first heard from certain Bay Area members—registered opposition to the Guardian. But the bulk of the criticisms denounced the Guardian's line for "hegemonic ambitions" it never held, or "sectarian implications." The purpose of this campaign of distortion, as Silber later admitted in his secret letter to PWOC, was to force the Guardian to "abandon—or at least re-open for discussion—its line as expressed" in the party-building paper—in other words, to abandon the basis on which the Clubs were founded.

By now most of the Club members were in opposition to the Guardian. They demanded that the paper retract its position paper, that Silber's polemics against the Guardian be published in the paper and implying that they should have virtual autonomy. Before any agreement was reached on the broader political line questions Silber and leading members of the Clubs most committed to the "leading center" strategy were in constant communication in developing strategy. The object was obviously to force the Guardian to back down (which would have put Silber and his leading associates in the network into positions of considerable political influence within the Guardian as well as in the Clubs) or, failing this, to work toward making the Clubs independent of the Guardian, with Silber and his circle in command.

The Guardian sent Smith to the West Coast to address 30th anniversary meetings and to hold discussions with the three West Coast Clubs, who seemed closest to Silber's line. This was the first time any Guardian representative other than Silber had visited these Clubs. The purpose of the discussions was to assure Club members that the Guardian wasn't out to wreck the party-building movement and that the idea of forming a limited political organization around the Guardian line was the very basis upon which the Guardian formed the Clubs.

It was a long shot and didn't succeed, much to no one's surprise. Those few Club members who supported the Guardian all along received encouragement; the others, if anything, became

more hostile because they simply refused to believe Silber capable of the deception toward the Guardian that was explained to them, although they all too easily believed the charges against the Guardian staff.

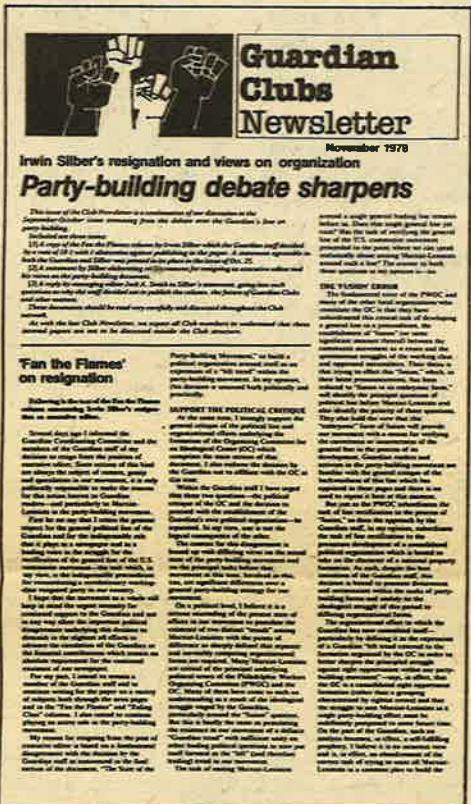
While in the Bay Area, the regional Club organized a meeting of local Guardian Sustainers with Smith as the guest. In addition to Sustainers, members of the local OCIC affiliates were invited and the Club itself launched an attack on the Guardian from one direction, while the OCIC forces attacked from another.

From that moment on it was obvious that the paper's experiment in forming a limited political organization around its line had failed, at least in its initial attempt with Silber at the helm; but the charade went on a couple of months more.

It became very ugly, at least in terms of dirty tricks against the Guardian, and remains so to this day. The more recent charge that Guardian staff members are "petty-bourgeois entrepreneurs" is just one of a number of examples.

The worst incident, from the Guardian's point of view, began last November and continued for several months with Silber and a political associate on the staff, Frances Beal, publicly charging the paper with racism. (Silber ultimately attracted one additional supporter from the staff, making three opposition members all told.)

The incident began when a relatively new and inexperienced staff member reprehensibly and entirely on his own opened a letter addressed to Beal from another political organization and made a copy of it to give to other CC members. In



a self-criticism he said he made this serious error because he believed Beal, then on the CC, was not informing the rest of the CC of her activities as a representative of the Guardian to other groups.

Since the letter was addressed to a Black member of the staff and was sent by a third world group, the charge of "racism" was launched by the three opposition members. The CC and staff met several times for many hours to evaluate this charge. The staff member involved was sharply criticized for his incorrect act, which was viewed as a foolish and individually factional mistake but not as a "racist" episode.

The charge of "racism" continued to be brought up, however, finally snowballing into allegations that the paper's leadership had "covered up" the "racist incident" and accusing other staffers who disagreed with this view as being "racist." As the charges mounted and were being taken out of the staff to other organizations, the four other Black staff members issued a statement demanding that the "racism" crusade be brought to an immediate halt. They wrote:

"The charge of racism, needless to say, should not be made lightly. In fact, it makes a mockery of the struggle against racism to do so, as has been done in these two instances (referring to long memos making the charge). The charges were raised in an effort to continue the extreme factionalism of Beal and Silber in recent months. We overwhelmingly condemn such a backhanded use of the charge. This method of political struggle reflects an opportunist position vis-a-vis racism that cannot be overlooked. Silber and Beal have made the charges to discredit the Guardian leadership in the eyes of the staff and to discredit the Guardian newspaper in the eyes of the Marxist-Leninist and antiracist movement, and not to correct racist behavior. We hope that the three comrades . . . refrain from making further ill-founded charges of racism in the future."

But they didn't, of course. The charges were brought up repeatedly within the party-building and antiracist movement as an example of the Guardian's backwordness and worse. The point is

that the original reprehensible and isolated incident was manipulated by Silber and his two supporters who opposed the Guardian's "State of the Party-Building Movement" document in order to further their designs to discredit the Guardian.

By December of last year the Clubs were completely out of control—or rather, they were in the complete control of Silber and his circle. Under Silber's guidance, they formed their own steering committee and were waging day-to-day struggle with the Guardian while making elaborate, meaningless gestures calling for "reconciliation" that would have, if accepted, amounted to the complete abandonment of the Guardian's decision to foster the growth of a small organization around its line. Reconciliation was impossible. The Clubs had become a political runaway guided by an individual for whom the Guardian staff no longer maintained any trust.

At the same time, the Guardian staff had comradesly feelings toward the great majority of Club members, was in agreement with the 10 political principles which united the Clubs (subsequently dropped when they became the NNMLC), and viewed the Clubs as a legitimate Marxist-Leninist formation.

A meeting initiated by the Clubs to discuss "reconciliation" was scheduled in New York Jan. 19. The Guardian was aware that should "reconciliation" fail, the Club leadership was prepared to declare independence and convert the Clubs into a party-building organization dedicated to the "leading center" idea. The Guardian decided to "let them go their own way" and work out an agreement for developing a fraternal relationship with the soon-to-be independent group, if possible.

When the Club steering committee met with the CC, the Guardian announced it was dissolving the Clubs. The CC statement read:

"We have reached the point where a separation exists between the Guardian and Guardian Clubs. This condition, wherein the Guardian exercises no authority, influence or leadership over the Club network, has been a reality for almost two months.

"We see no way to resolve this situation at the present stage. Thus the position paper on plans for the growth and expansion of Guardian Clubs, which the Guardian Club Subcommittee has been working on for several months, will not be circulated. This is a pity because we think our plan for building Guardian Clubs this year was a good one.

"Instead, reality dictates that due to political, organizational and financial problems the Guardian must dissolve the Guardian Clubs. We understand Guardian Clubs are prepared for this event and intend to transform into an independent organization. We wish the new organization well and are prepared to give it some help.

"We do not intend in this paper to put forward a long summary of the conditions which have led to the transformation of Guardian Clubs into an independent organization in formation. This will be summarized in the future. Needless to say, much of it has to do with a situation internal to the Guardian. In general, we believe that our original intentions regarding Guardian Clubs were subverted in the process of execution.

"A few general points are worth noting, however.

"When we first officially announced our plan to form Guardian Clubs, our perspective was to build a limited political organization around the Guardian political line (the 29 points) which would further develop and promulgate this line within the party-building movement. Due to a variety of factors (many of which have been made known in the last two Club Newsletters), Guardian Clubs developed in a way contrary to the Guardian's original intentions. The principal responsibility for this circumstance rests with the Guardian. Due to internal problems, errors were made in the organization of the Clubs. These internal problems have now largely been cleared up—but the die has been cast regarding the Clubs and there is no way for the Guardian to influence the present Club network to return to the original path charted for the Clubs by the Guardian organization.

"We believe the position of building a limited political organization around the Guardian line is a correct one. We believe such an organization would have had a very beneficial impact upon the independent Marxist-Leninist party-building movement (antirevisionist, antidogmatist). We believe such an organization could have been instrumental in waging a struggle against the main danger within our movement (right opportunism), against sectarianism and against incorrect theories about building a party while at the same time could have played a constructive role in helping to develop strategies for uniting Marxist-Leninists around a correct political line.

"Unfortunately, we have not been able to develop such an organization at this stage. The Guardian Club network rejects the idea and due to some very critical problems of a financial nature

which jeopardize the very survival of the Guardian newspaper, we are in no position at this time to carry out the correct idea of building a limited political organization. Had the Clubs supported the proposal to become a limited political organization, we believe the idea could have succeeded—even given the Guardian's present survival problems—because the Clubs themselves had the wherewithal to preside over their own development. (The Club Subcommittee's plans for the future of Guardian Clubs proposed virtual autonomy for the Clubs once agreement was reached on uniting around the 29 points and on some degree of formal organizational responsibility.)

"The contradiction which broke into the open over the 'State of the Party-Building Movement' paper of the Guardian staff cannot be resolved at this time. In general, the Clubs have sharp criticisms of the Guardian position, particularly pertaining to the section relating to the Guardian's own organizational plans. The Guardian, for its part, reaffirms its position that the 'State of the Party-Building' (SPBM) paper is a correct evaluation of the party-building movement today and that the section dealing with our intention to build a limited political organization around the Guardian line is sound.

"We have heard the contradiction described as a struggle between two lines on party-building. This is not totally accurate, in our view, because neither the Guardian nor Guardian Clubs has a developed strategy for party-building, at least at this stage. The 'State of the Party-Building Movement' document did not put forward a developed strategy for party-building. It reaffirmed the Guardian's position to develop a limited political organization. The struggle was over the question of building such an organization. Only the Guardian, as an independent political entity, could decide whether or not to build an organization around its line, not the Clubs. Indeed, the Clubs were formed to fulfill this very purpose.

"But that's water under the proverbial bridge. The Guardian has one view; the Clubs have another. We did everything possible to rebut some of the preposterous allegations that were being circulated about the Guardian's 'real intentions' to build some kind of preparty organization, to seek 'hegemony' over the party-building movement, to adopt a 'sectarian' view and so forth. These allegations were based on the 'implications' of our position and not on the reality of our position, 'implications' contrived to destroy our plans to build a limited political organization.

"So be it. We have learned from some of our mistakes and the process of struggle has been politically enlightening. Club members, too, have learned things from this struggle and they are probably stronger because of the experience.

"The upshot of all this is that we have given birth to a political organization. It is no longer the organization we tried to build but it exists and we do not oppose it. There are many things we have in common. In dissolving the Club network we are dissolving the fiction that Guardian Clubs continue to exist. At issue, in our view, are the terms of separation. Should the Guardian and this new organization in formation have close and fraternal relations or should there be distant and antagonistic relations? That is the question.

"From our view, relations should be close and fraternal."

At the meeting the Club steering committee proposed that a "special relationship" exist between the new formation and the Guardian. Some of the Club proposals—such as locating the new organization's headquarters in the Guardian office—were rejected by the Guardian because they indicated a far closer relationship than actually existed.

The "special relationship" didn't last long. It was impossible to come to speedy agreement of a joint statement describing the split that was to appear in the Guardian and an abrasive standoff occurred. Adding to the difficulty was a statement on the Indochina situation written by Silber and distributed by the Clubs which ended up implying that the Guardian was taking the side of imperialism because in addition to condemning China for invading Vietnam the paper criticized Vietnam for invading Kampuchea.

This pamphlet was doubly troubling to the Guardian. First because of the incorrect line of the Clubs in supporting the invasion of Kampuchea, which the Guardian viewed as a backward step for political line in the party-building movement, and in charging that those who criticized Vietnam were siding with U.S. imperialism. Secondly, Guardian bylaws and political norms of organization stipulate that a staff member not criticize the paper's political line in public—and Silber, though not executive editor, was still a staff member. The staff criticized him for breaking this rule, which he had actually violated several times in the recent period, but took no action.

The NNMLC was formed in March, with Silber as chairperson. A number of highly critical documents about the Guardian came out of this

Continued on next page

founding meeting which the Guardian did not learn about for months. Also, the NNMLC decided to drop any intention to develop a "special relationship" with the Guardian—which they had sought far more aggressively than the Guardian to begin with—but the paper wasn't informed of this for months, either.

By then, Silber was making a practice of publicly criticizing the Guardian while remaining on its staff. In early April, after Silber made it clear he did not consider himself responsible to the Guardian for his political activities, he agreed to change his status from staff member to "associate." He still wrote for the paper, continued his column, attended staff meetings and drew full salary, but only worked one or two days a week and was not bound by internal discipline.

In late April, the Guardian came into possession of the letter from Silber and Beal to PWOC previously mentioned, written when both were still full staff members. This letter, claiming "credit" for the wreckage of Guardian Clubs, admitted that Silber had been engaged in secret opposition to the Guardian's line since June 1977.

More disturbing, however, were its references to "certain confidential conversations" held between the authors and PWOC (the substance of which is still unknown to us) and the use of the fact that Silber and Beal were "intimately associated with the Guardian leadership" in an attempt to give their "expose of the Guardian leadership's motivations more credence."

The staff unanimously adopted a resolution denouncing the "deliberate attempt by Irwin Silber and Frances Beal, while they were full staff members, to poison relations between the Guardian and a fraternal organization." "The Guardian CC and staff," it concluded, "sharply condemns this unprincipled, factional political behavior. . . . We regard it as an extremely serious violation of every norm of political behavior within a Marxist-Leninist organization."

This June, nearly three months after the founding of the NNMLC, the organization published the text of Silber's political report made at the meeting. In it, Silber traces his version of the difference within the Guardian over the Clubs, utterly concealing his own actual role over the years (early 1977 to early 1979) when he made the transition from demanding the formation of democratic centralist regional preparty organizations under the Guardian umbrella (MLOCs) to his present position. He even provides yet another version of why Guardian Clubs were formed. "Can it be denied that the formation of the Guardian Clubs, the very ideological underpinnings that gave them life, were based on our common critique of and struggle against the fusion line?" Yes.

In addition to this revised historical account of how the Clubs were formed, Silber's political report goes to some length to conceal the political differences that emerged during the struggle around the SPBM. The document maintains that the line held by Silber and the Clubs "did not manifest itself in a line on party-building." It makes no mention of the elements of the rectification-reestablishment—"leading center" line that did emerge, and offers no explanation for why the full line was concealed. The Guardian staff position is characterized as a "rather deliberate exploitation" of the party-building movement in order to "build up the influence, prestige and material base of the Guardian newspaper, its staff and leading cadre."

Having thus concentrated his political fire on a psychological characterization of the Guardian staff, Silber then posed the question: "What is the source of the opportunism manifested by the Guardian leadership?" And he answered:

"First, it is a reflection of a small-minded, petty bourgeois entrepreneurial spirit which has infected leading members of the Guardian collective. Just as they saw the Clubs as their 'property' so too do they see the Guardian as their 'property,' rather than as a newspaper which is supported by the general left movement and has responsibilities to it. This spirit is fed by the Guardian's mode of ideological production, which is strongly influenced by concepts of 'coverage' and 'deadline' and leads to a generally pragmatic style of work.

"Second, the Guardian staff depends upon the movement remaining in its present state of political, ideological and organizational backwardness in order for its 'leading' role to be enhanced. It tends to view the development of theoretical work—a task for which it is poorly equipped and therefore has little respect—as threatening to its own standing. Should Marxist-Leninists unite and be able to move forward the party-building movement in a common effort, such a consolidation might make the movement less dependent on the Guardian and lead to a loss of influence and 'leverage' by the Guardian staff.

"Desperately seeking material support without wanting to relinquish the slightest measure of political or organizational control, the Guardian staff has elevated the concept of 'independence' into a principle and participates in the party-

Would Guardian Clubs develop along the lines originally conceived by the Guardian staff . . . or would they become a vehicle for Silber's 'rectification' strategy? That was the question.

building movement only to the extent that it can 'control' it.

"To be completely blunt about it, the Guardian staff does not practice Marxism-Leninism and is not seriously committed to party-building unless it can exert hegemony over the process.

"These are very harsh judgments. We are convinced on the basis of our intimate experience with the present Guardian leadership and a careful analysis of the political views they have put forward it is a correct judgment."

The Guardian received a copy of this statement just before it was to have had another round of discussions with the NNMLC about developing our mutual relations. The CC postponed the meeting to have time to have a full staff discussion on this latest attack.

One result was that the staff decided—even though it understands not all members of the NNMLC agree with the above characterization by any means—that it would be best to postpone any talks indefinitely. Announcing this decision to the NNMLC, the CC wrote:

"Such a statement goes beyond distortion and slander. It is an attempt at political character assassination of the lowest calibre. Our worst enemies have rarely stooped so low. Principled political differences and criticism are one thing; allegations that the Guardian serves the forces of counterrevolution, seeking to obstruct the forward development of the left and progressive movements is quite another. We do not intend to 'refute' these allegations. Let them stand without rebuttal as a testimony to the NNMLC's political perceptions and Marxist analysis, style of work and spirit of unity."

Another result of the staff discussion of the political report was the decision to sever all relations with Silber and announce the decision in our July 11th issue of the Guardian.

In dismissing Silber the Guardian was aware it was expelling an individual who had made important contributions to the paper. We wish to be frank about the nature of the role Silber played within the Guardian, however, because this has been exaggerated by Silber himself and because the NNMLC has claimed that the Guardian's political line has degenerated since he resigned as executive editor 10 months ago.

Silber was never the paper's principal leader, even though this impression was conveyed to some people not aware of the internal Guardian political organization. From 1973-78 he functioned as elected co-leader along with Smith, who has managed the paper since 1967 when it became a worker's cooperative. A number of others played important leadership roles during the past few years, including managing editor Barbara Miner, foreign editor Karen Gellen, general manager Donna Lamb and labor editor Ben Bedell—all current CC members. Silber's main task was as the Guardian's "public face," because he was a good public speaker and articulate Marxist. He was an important writer and columnist. He also led the paper on the question of party-building, which had positive and negative aspects. In addition, he was in charge of Guardian Clubs for a year and was regarded as a valuable political asset.

Silber played no role in directing, organizing or producing the paper itself. Nor was he involved in the various "broadening and deepening" improvements the Guardian has undergone over the past several years, except as a somewhat veiled critic of "broadening."

Insofar as the Guardian's political line was concerned, it is incorrect to think, as some of his advocates advertise, that he played the leading role—whether the issue was Angola or Eritrea or trade union line or the woman question or China or any of the other positions the Guardian has taken over the years.

In common with various others, he took the initiative on this issue or that, such as "Eurocommunism," for instance. But during the period he was executive editor, while influential he simply did not function as the leading political figure. That function was fulfilled by the Guardian staff through the elected members of the CC, some of whom have been decisive in formulating policy. For several years Silber wrote most of the Guardian's editorials, a task that involves implementing a previously developed position in print, not creating it. His columns were in the main politically stimulating and creative but in the last few months they were largely vehicles for expressing the NNMLC line.

In the end, following his series of extraordinary attacks upon the paper, combined with the enormous distrust he generated within the entire staff and the use to which his column was being

put, the Guardian could no longer politically afford to lend him the credibility of publication in its pages.

Retaining Silber, knowing his charges had been circulated throughout the movement, gave possible legitimacy to his charges, and only gave Silber further prestige which could again be used to attack the Guardian from an "insider's" perspective.

In response to dropping Silber for good, the NNMLC discontinued whatever minimal work it was still doing to help the Guardian in news gathering and circulation. In addition, the NNMLC organized a petition, sent out in the envelopes of the Bay Area Bureau which it destroyed, to Guardian Sustainers, urging that they "join us in protesting Silber's firing" and demanding his "reinstatement." The petition also asked for financial contributions and offered NNMLC literature for sale.

In the months since Silber resigned as the paper's executive editor, according to Silber and certain, but definitely not all, NNMLC members, the Guardian has undergone a degeneration politically and journalistically. Looking back, the Guardian is quite proud of its work during this period.

Politically, the Guardian has continued to uphold the line the staff collectively developed over the years, expanding its international perspective by sharply condemning China's "three worlds theory" in a Viewpoint and taking the stand it did on the China-Vietnam-Kampuchea question. In all other areas the paper has maintained the lines it has developed over the past 10 years in particular and 31 years in general. Journalistically, the paper's "broadening, deepening and diversifying" improvements in March have met with very high readership approval. According to Guardian readers, the paper is better written, better edited and more attractive than a year ago. During this time gains have been made in coverage of various peoples' movements, from antinuke to the struggle of gay people. While losses were registered in some bureaus because NNMLC members no longer contributed, the number of correspondents for the paper has increased, domestically and internationally. Also, the Guardian's attempts to stimulate a dialogue within the left by encouraging diversity in its Opinion and Analysis section has been welcomed by readers.

In this same period, circulation continued to rise, as did membership in the Sustainer system. Despite these gains the Guardian found itself in a perilous financial condition earlier this year, due largely to inflation, but readers and Sustainers responded in unprecedented numbers to our emergency appeal early this year.

Considering the difficulties of a worker's cooperative attempting to publish a quality leftwing newspaper without rich backers or organizational support and with a staff that is chronically underpaid and overworked, the Guardian believes the paper improved remarkably during this period, not "degenerated."

CONCLUSIONS

What is clear to us now is that several advanced and articulate Marxist-Leninists had joined the loosely-structured Clubs with a particular party-building strategy already in mind and that over the course of the Clubs' first year Silber was won over to that strategy. But at no point did Silber even hint at his political changes within the Guardian until the majority of Club members were either in agreement with him or at least willing to accept the idea that the Guardian's reaffirmation of its original intentions was a ruse to cover up a "new" line being imposed by a "commandist, backward and sectarian" staff.

In essence, the Guardian's tentative and limited effort to develop an organization around its line in order to participate more fully in the party-building movement was being taken over politically from outside the Guardian and reshaped into a "rectification and reestablishment" organization based on the party-building idea of a "leading center" of individual Marxist-Leninists who would develop a political line for the "movement as a whole."

However, even though the Guardian staff lost its Club organization, it retained control of the newspaper itself and prevented it from falling into de facto political control of a small Marxist-Leninist group which would have used the enormous propaganda value of the publication for its own party-building purposes.

The Guardian is attempting to learn from its mistakes, a number of which were made during the struggle over Guardian Clubs.

Perhaps the principal error goes right back to

the beginning—deciding in 1976 to intervene ideologically, politically and organizationally in the party-building process before fully exploring all the concrete conditions and without sufficient work in developing a party-building line. At the time, few if any organizations within the movement had a consolidated party-building line, of course, but this defect caused considerable difficulty within the Guardian as the struggle unfolded.

Almost as serious an error was the Guardian's decision to go ahead with its party-building suppression and the 29 unity principles in June 1977 without conducting more investigation of the actual conditions within the movement and—most emphatically—before talking over this projected step at length with other party-building organizations. In retrospect, this was "go-it-aloneism" and it created a number of misunderstanding within the movement.

These errors were caused by a certain voluntarism and pragmatism on the Guardian's part, an adverse result of the success the Guardian has had in putting out a people's newspaper under difficult conditions. There is a significant difference between publishing a good political newspaper for the movement or playing an important role in developing an independent Marxist-Leninist political line on world affairs on the one hand, and in making a positive contribution to the organizational tasks of party-building on the other. Additional development and thought was necessary, but the Guardian tried to "leap over" this phase, an indication of impatience.

Another mistake, related to the above, was to think we could accomplish just about anything we set our minds to without making serious preparation based on a full understanding of all the factors. This showed itself most blatantly when the Guardian decided on the correct idea of building a limited political organization to express its line in practice before working out all the aspects in detail—and then leaving the job to the wrong person to carry out while the rest of the staff went back to putting out and supporting the paper.

The Guardian must reexamine its views on party-building strategy. It must clarify its views on the question of building an ideological center—the principle of which was hardly discussed in our party-building document but yet constitutes an exceptionally important aspect of party-building strategy.

It must further define scientifically what was intended by the use of the term "trend" in relation to the various currents that have developed in the movement, especially after the Guardian's own small organization—the Clubs—has been dissolved. It must further study the question of "fusion" and "leading center" objectively as well as investigate other conceptions of party-building strategy that have not gained currency yet within the movement.

Another shortcoming includes being ignorant of the true political situation within the Clubs. It is not sufficient to rationalize this error by maintaining we did not possess accurate information. The Guardian should have acquired such information and given much better guidance to the Clubs. Partly as a result of this error, it was a mistake to develop the paper on party-building and circulate it in July 1978 without taking Club views into account, thinking as we did that the Clubs were in unity with the Guardian's initiative. There were probably other errors as well in relation to party-building which the Guardian staff has yet to sum up in the second part of this article to be published in a few months.

Insofar as the Club idea is concerned, the Guardian is still very much of the opinion that it was correct to try to form a limited organizational expression of the Guardian's politics. And regarding political line, the Guardian does not recognize any errors for which it should offer self-criticism.

Despite the difficulties of this struggle, in fact, we believe the Guardian's political line has continued to advance and to become more useful to the Marxist-Leninist party-building movement and the progressive forces as a whole. This—and the ability to put forward that political line to a relatively mass audience on the left—is the Guardian's great strength.

The Guardian plays a unique role in the U.S. as an independent revolutionary newspaper that has the capacity to reach very broad sections of the movement. Among many forces, including some who disagree with this or that aspect of the paper, it is generally regarded as a credible instrument of the class struggle.

The Guardian's ability to function as a transmission belt from the progressive movement to the Marxist movement, while being able to serve openly as a Marxist paper, is a valuable asset which we do not intend to compromise. Our future party-building activity will keep this unique and independent role in mind.

In the short run, the Guardian's experience with the Clubs and the struggle with Silber created some problems for the paper and the movement. In the long run we are confident the Guardian has grown from the process and is now able to make even better contributions to the common cause.