

RESPONSES TO THE RECTIFICATIONIST CRITIQUE OF THE NATIONAL MINORITY  
MARXIST-LENINIST CONFERENCE

Introduction to the Southern California Local Center Packet

On March 1 a group of local Rectificationists held a tendency-wide forum to present a critique of certain facets of the National Minority Marxist-Leninist Conference, and to offer "some initial opinions on how to begin to forge a correct orientation towards the question of race relations in our movement." The main presentations at this forum were made by two Rectificationists from the Third World Women's Alliance in the Bay Area. During the discussion portion of this forum, a number of us from the Southern California Local Center of the OCIC participated in debate, and raised some criticisms of both the forum in particular, and of the manner in which Rectification comrades have approached the National Minority Marxist-Leninist Conference (NMM-LC) in general. This packet contains some summaries of points that we from SCALC attempted to make.

The purpose of this packet is neither to offer a full summation of the forum and the views presented there, nor to present a thorough evaluation of the relationship between the Rectification Circle and the NMM-LC. Our current resources and limitations preclude our attempting either of the latter at this point. And we do not intend to offer our evaluation of the conclusions and results of the NMM-LC itself: the weakness of the reporting on the NMM-LC and the continuing absence of the Planning Committee's summation make this impossible. Thus our aims are fairly limited. Essentially we want to put out summaries of the views that we raised at the forum in writing, so that they can receive consideration from other comrades in the OC, and thereby make some contribution to the ideological struggle around the NMM-LC. In this regard two things should be emphasized: i) at this stage we feel that it is correct to ask that this packet be restricted to OC members (we plan to offer fuller discussion of these and related issues to the tendency in the near future); ii) while there was some collective preparation for the forum, the views summarized here are the individual views of the OC comrade who made the comment.

To help orient those reading the summaries that follow, we are providing some background information below.

Background to the LA Rectificationist Forum on the NMM-LC

For over a year now a sharp, though intermittent, struggle has raged in the LA tendency between the Rectification party-building line and the developing OCIC line. The most important and consistent form that this struggle has taken has been contention over the NMM-LC.

The first phase of the struggle around the NMM-LC was initiated by the Rectificationists just two weeks before the NMM-LC took place last June. The thrust of the Rectification approach during this phase was to charge that the NMM-LC was "sectarian", was splitting the national minority comrades in the tendency, and was objectively racist because it was only open to those without consolidated opposition to the 18 points and the struggle to build a single ideological center (ie, it excluded national minority comrades who held the Rectification line). The Rectificationists also raised criticisms of organizational sloppiness, and bad communications by the Planning Committee of the NMM-LC, although they saw these criticisms as simply more evidence of the essentially sectarian nature of the NMM-LC. Initially the Rectification attack on the NMM-LC was extremely harsh: OCIC forces in our local were blitzed with phone calls demanding an immediate meeting, at that meeting we were baraged with sometimes contradictory accounts of the NMM-LC and its process of organization, and we were pressed to unite immediately with the charge of "sectarianism" and to inter-yene by calling the Planning Committee and demanding that they cancel the Conference.

In our initial response, we rejected the Rectificationist demand that we unite in a knee-jerk manner with their charge of sectarianism, and we refused to attempt to have the NMM-LC--then just a few days away--called off. We pointed out that the Planning Committee of the NMM-LC was autonomous from the OCIC, and that we from the OC were not instantly "accountable" for everything that the Planning Committee did, as the Rectificationists claimed we were. Most importantly we made a self-criticism that, despite the fact that the OC was committed to supporting the NMM-LC process, the National Steering Committee--OCIC had not kept us fully informed of developments in this process, and we ourselves had taken little initiative to find out about it. We committed ourselves to investigating the NMM-LC, to considering seriously the Rectificationist criticisms of it, and to holding further meetings with the Rectificationist comrades around these questions.

Subsequently, on the basis of the knowledge we gained through an investigation of the development of the NMM-LC, we came to support the Planning Committee's conception of this Conference (though we still had too little information to take positions on the results of the NMM-LC). We therefore rejected the Rectificationist criticism that the guiding conception of the NMM-LC was intrinsically sectarian. We came to understand that the Rectificationist position that such a Conference should have only a racial basis of unity, and should not require a certain level of political (in this case, party-building line) unity, was a profound error. We did, however, develop certain criticisms of weak organizational practices and poor leadership on the part of both the Planning Committee, and the National Steering Committee of the OCIC (in its role of leading the OC's support of the NMM-LC); these criticisms were communicated to both bodies verbally and in writing, and both bodies united with them. Also, we deepened our own self-criticism by analyzing our error of not taking sufficient initiative to keep abreast of the development of the NMM-LC as objectively racist: we failed to implement adequately our commitment to support the NMM-LC and thereby undercut this important step in the struggle against racism. Finally we raised criticisms of the local Rectification comrades for the sectarian and uncomradely character of their attack on the NMM-LC in general, and of their approach to struggle with us around this question in particular. Our position on the NMM-LC, and our various criticisms and self-criticisms were communicated and discussed with Rectification comrades as we had promised (we even gave a copy of our written summation of these questions to one of their representatives). It is important to note that they have never to our knowledge voluntarily acknowledged these discussions and communications publically. Rather they have characterized us as refusing "to struggle" around the NMM-LC.

The second phase of the local struggle around the NMM-LC emerged by degrees in late 1979 and clearly corresponded to a shift in tactics by the national Rectification camp in its circle offensive against the OCIC. Whereas the initial overall approach of the Rectification grouping was to jam the OCIC hard on as many fronts as possible--thus sowing confusion and suspicion of the OC process in the tendency and making room for the continued circle existence of the Rectification camp--the new approach was (and is) to flip to an articulated position that "unity" in the tendency should prevail over contention, to elaborate a plethora of "initiatives" that the OC must take up immediately in the interests of the "whole trend", and to chide the OC for putting its "organizational" interests first when it doesn't rapidly reorganize itself to the dictates of the Rectification Program. (A fundamental feature of this new approach is to obfuscate the fact that the whole OC process calls for an overall systemization of the ideological struggle for the whole tendency, rather than the piecemeal development of diplomatic ties between circles for first this, then that individual project, as the Rectificationists are doing). Concretely, the national Rectification shift was manifest locally in the struggle around the NMM-LC by the Rectification proposal of a joint forum with us in the OC around the NMM-LC and its results, and by the adoption of a more comradely style toward us.

Our response to the proposal of a joint forum was not in any way to reject it in principle--actually we tended to feel it was a good idea. Our position was and is, however that any forum on this Conference had to await the publication of the main speeches and the Planning Committee summation, if it was to deal with the Conference in a principled and informed manner. It is certainly correct to be critical of the fact that the NMM-LC speeches were distributed so long after the Conference, and of the fact that the PC summation is still not complete and in circulation.

But our position is that no scientific assessment of the NMM-LC--and especially of its results and conclusions--is conceivable without knowing what occurred there. Ultimately the Rectificationists decided to go ahead with a forum (they commented that the whole thing had dragged on too long and they wanted to be done with it), and we were informed two weeks ahead of time that it was scheduled for March 1. Because we still lacked the summation, and because of the extremely short notice given, there was no way we could participate on the forum program. However because our feeling was that the whole Rectification approach to the NMM-LC indicated that the forum would function more to promote the prestige of the Rectification circle than to advance principled ideological struggle, and because the advance materials for the forum indicated that there would be a good deal of distortion of the NMM-LC process, some of

the local OC forces prepared to struggle against this distortion during the discussion section of the forum.

In our view the forum turned out essentially as we had suspected: it did not deal in a principled manner with the NMM-LC, and subordinated advancement of the ideological struggle to the requirements of circle warfare. Our comments during the forum, reviewed in the following summaries, attempted to show how and why this was the case. But, whatever the desires of the local Rectification camp, the struggle around the NMM-LC did not end in our locale with the March 1 forum. We in the Southern California Local Center are committed to seeing that the results of the NMM-LC strengthen the tendency-wide struggle for a revolutionary party--without ignoring or obscuring any of the errors or weaknesses of that conference process. In the longer term we will organize a tendency-wide forum in Southern California with the purpose of considering the conclusions and experience of the NMM-LC in a principled manner. In the shorter term, though, this packet represents a step toward fulfilling our commitment.

April 15, 1980

Steering Committee  
Southern California Local Center  
OCIC

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I.

Comments at Rectification Forces' Forum on the National Minorities Marxist-Leninist Conference IM from OCIC So. Cal. Local Center

I'd like to try to clarify the purpose and intent of the National Minorities Marxist-Leninist Conference, and to explain our relationship as OCIC forces to it. The comrades who presented this discussion tonight have obscured the purpose of the conference and misrepresented its content. Never in the letter they sent out, or in their presentation tonight, did they make clear that the primary purpose of this conference was to introduce a perspective on party building. A perspective that puts forward the need for a single ideological center for our tendency, the primacy of theory in this period of party building, the 18 points as the correct demarcation for the anti-revisionist, anti-left opportunist tendency, and the understanding that left opportunism is the main danger in the anti-revisionist movement.

Although the National Minorities M-L Conference addressed the questions of racism and sexism, it addressed them in the context of party building as the central task of all Marxist-Leninists. The comrades who organized tonight's discussion would have us believe that the conference did not see party building as the central task of minority Marxist-Leninists! As far as I know they did not include the main opening speech of the conference in their preparation packet for tonight, although they did include the speeches on sexism and particular tasks. That key note speech was on party building! Without this speech and the resolutions that follow from it, the other two speeches are incomplete and can be distorted. It is available on our literature table. I hope you'll get it. In my opinion it's an excellent presentation. By the way, this speech addresses the question of why many minority M-L's remain outside of the party building movement----a point that Linda raised this evening, and challenged the P.C. and other OC forces for not taking up fully. The speech points to the errors of the CPUSA regarding both theoretical positions and leadership of the mass movements; to the left opportunism of many anti-revisionist forces in the party building and mass movements; as well as racism among white communists, as key obstacles for the participation of minority comrades.

I think it's ironic that the comrades who are tonight criticizing the conference for not taking up party building as the central task of minority M-L's, are the same people who a few months ago were criticizing the conference for taking up a party building perspective other than their own, instead of focusing solely on racism. The fact that the conference would present the OC perspective on party building, and that the key note speech at the conference was on party building has been well known to these comrades.

Given that the purpose of the conference is clear, the question is why organize a sperate conferece on the OCIC party building perspective for minority Marxist-Leninists? The answer to that question lies in the history of racism in the communist movement itself. Throughout that history, with the notable exceptions in the CPUSA of the Yokenin trials in the 19 30's and the campaign against white chauvnism in 1949, the communist movement has not openly confronted its own racism. Just as racism remains a primary obstacle to building unity in the U.S. working class, it is a central obstacle in building unity in the party building movement. Today many minority M-L's who are active in the mass movements are not involved in, or are not in leadership of, the party building movement because of racism among white communists.

- Two particularly common forms of this racism have been a
1. tendency to underestimate the theoretical abilities of minority M-L's, often relegating them to work in the mass movements and
  2. a tendency to ghettoize minority M-L's by relegating them to work on the theory of racism, but not on other party building issues.

The National Minorities M-L Conference was initiated by the steering committee of the OCIC because of their understanding of the necessity to strengthen the minority composition of our effort to forge a single ideological center, for the tendendy. It came out of their recognition that many of the most advanced comrades in our tendency are minorities who remain outside of organized forms because of the failure of white communists historically and currently to seriously take up the struggle against racism.

The steering committee of the OCIC proposed that a committee of minority M-L's who were united around the OCIC's 18 principles of unity and the need for building an ideological center, take up the task of daveloping the conference independent of the steering committee and the OCIC as a whole. The autonomy of the planning committee was proposed because of the general weakness of many OC forces on the question of racism, how to struggletagainst it, and its centrality to the party building movement. The sgeering committee put a high priority on the conference and committed the OCIC to support the conference politically and financially.

The correctness of having an independent planning committee of minority M-L's for the conference has been borne out in mistakes made by OCIC comrades regarding the conference. Mistakes that were objectively racist. Examples would be the steering oommittee's failure to develop and direct OC forces on how they could support the conference politically. Another error was one we made locally of not seeking out more information on the conference, its nature, and how we could support and popularize its gains.

We are developing many self-criticisms of our relationship as OC forces to this conference. We are finding that this method of

identifying and combatting our own concrete weaknesses in the struggle <sup>against racism</sup> is one important way to consolidate our forces and the tendency as a whole on the centrality of this struggle in our effort to build a party.

The criteria developed by the Planning Committee for attending the conference was unity with or not consolidated opposition to--the 18 principles of unity and the need to forge a single ideological center for the tendency. We do not think this was sectarian precisely because the basis of unity centered around political line first, not race. There was no attempt to ghettoize the conference on the basis of race--but rather on the basis of political perspective.

We are not without criticisms of the Planning Committee. We are critical of their 1. lack of a systematic approach to preparations for the conference. Esp. a sloppiness in their methods of inviting and preparing those who attended, and informing those who did not. Our major criticism of the Planning Committee is that they have not yet made a written summation of the conference available for the tendency. We understand that the summation is coming out this month. We think its delay has led to a lot of confusion and misunderstanding about the conference and has hurt the tendency as a whole. It has held back our own ability to learn from the conference and popularize its lessons for the tendency.

Now that we have the written speeches from the conference, and have heard a verbal summation of the conference at our national OCIC conference, we do feel we can make clear what we as OCIC forces unite with from the NMLC.

1. That Party building is the central task of all M-L'S.
2. That racism is a central obstacle to building a multi-national party.
3. Because of its centrality, struggling against racism is a general task of all M-L's, and demands a thorough study of the roots, history, and manifestations of racism in the U.S. generally and in the party building movement in particular.
4. That because of the history of racism in the U.S., white and minority M-L's have particular tasks in party building, as well as general tasks in common. This does not mean that these tasks are the only tasks of whites or minorities nor does it mean that they are restricted to <sup>only</sup> being carried out by whites or minorities. Instead it means that specific tasks receive a special emphasis by one grouping or another.
5. Sexism is another important obstacle to building unity in the party and therefore it is the responsibility of all M-L's to study sexism, and struggle against it.

6. We feel that it was correct to hold the conference, and that the conference represents a positive step forward for the tendency. The conference has made theoretical contributions to the tendency. It has drawn more minority M-L's into the effort to create an ideological center for our movement. It has helped OC forces to identify and combat racist errors in our own ranks.

Although we unite with the above as OC forces, we do not take a position as a grouping on many of the conclusions put forward at the conference. For example, although we unite with the formulation that there are particular tasks for white and minority M-L's because of the history of racism in the movement, we have not consolidated a common position on what those specific tasks are. Or, although we unite with the understanding that sexism is an important obstacle to building the party, we do not have a common position that it is the primary contradiction among and between minority M-L's.

At this point in time we address these questions as individuals in the tendency as many of you do tonight. We receive the resolutions from the conference as they were offered---as working hypotheses for members of the tendency to consider in an effort to deepen our understanding of party building. At our national OCIC conference, when a member of the Planning Committee was summing up the NMMLC, he said that the Planning Committee had put these questions before the movement for their consideration. That now this theory had to be struggled over and deepened. If the Planning Committee is proven wrong, we will also have gained something, because then we'll know better what's right.

We unite with this perspective on the NMMLC. And we see this as a very different attitude than the one from our comrades in the Third World Women's Alliance who view the conference as a serious setback for the M-L movement. We consider <sup>their view</sup> an incorrect attitude towards ideological struggle and consolidation.

I want to make clear the responsibility and commitment that OCIC forces have to consolidate around the gains of the conference, and to critically examine its resolutions. We will not indefinitely continue ~~our current~~ relationship to the conference. In the next period, we'll enter a process of internal consolidation around the content of the conference. We don't see ourselves instantly unifying with or rejecting these resolutions. Instead we see taking up a process of study, struggle, and discussion around them.

We will also organize a public presentation and discussion of the conference which will take up 1) A summation of the conference 2) the content of the presentations 3) and self-criticisms and criticisms of ourselves, the Steering Committee and OCIC at large, the Planning Committee, and the Rectification forces.

We hope to have a member of the Planning Committee present for the discussion. we'd like you to sign our mailing list on the literature table so we can contact you with information about this public discussion.

Thank you

IM 3/1/80

When we first read the letter inviting us to this forum we became concerned with the accuracy with which the National Minorities Marxist-Leninist Conference was being represented to the tendency. We are in definite agreement with the sponsoring grouping that racism has plagued the communist and progressive movements historically and still poses a critical question to be addressed if we are to move forward. In fact we think that a concerted conscious struggle against racism in the communist movement is central to our ability to forge a leading line and build the vanguard party.

What we disagree with is some of the way the conference is being portrayed. Before I give specifics I want to emphasize that I hope my comments will not serve to stifle disagreement with or criticism of the conference or its work. I am not asking for total agreement with its resolutions, speeches, work and history in these remarks. As individuals we have questions and criticisms ourselves, some of which will undoubtedly come out tonight and some of which we'll discuss at a later date. We are not asking that folks not disagree with the conference, but rather that first and foremost they not distort it.

In the letter of invitation, we find many errors and distortions, conscious or unconscious and would like to comment on some in the order they appear in the letter (see attached). First, the conference was led by the National Minorities Marxist-Leninist Conference Planning Committee. We wonder why the words Marxist-Leninist were left out and don't think it's a detail. We ourselves have made the error of falling into calling the conference the National Minorities Conference and have come to understand the objective racism entailed in belittling its political essence. It was a Marxist-Leninist Conference and it is important for us all to learn to refer to it as such.

Second, saying the conference discussed "problems of racism and sexism within the movement and the relationship and responsibility of minority Marxist-Leninists to the party building movement" doesn't grasp the essence of the conference. The conference centered on party building and the issues of racism, sexism, and the particular tasks of minority Marxist-Leninists were all discussed not in the general but in-relation to party building. The fact that the letter nowhere mentions that the conference discussed party building, and in particular the anti-revisionist, anti-left tendency's need to build a single ideological center to address the primary of our theoretical work in this period of party building is a serious mistake.

Third, we think it fair to say that the results of the conference were contained not only in the draft resolutions, but also in the speeches given at the conference, copies of only some of which have been made available. We think that this is important to recognize if one tries to examine the conference not only in its appearance but also in its essence. It is particularly important for those critiquing the conference to grasp so that their just criticisms can be as accurate and instructional as possible, laying the basis for a strong rectification. Although resolutions are very important and should be written precisely and clearly, it is important that if one is trying to assess a conference to not only look at them, but also the speeches which help explain the train of thinking and context out of which the resolutions came. To fail to examine all the speeches would necessarily involve a significant risk of subjectivism and distortion which we would all agree is not in service to the tendency at all. Thus we would like to ask why those that have already decided "the orientation, approach and conclusions made by the conference represent an erroneous viewpoint which does not add clarity to these crucial questions", are not presenting a critique of all the speeches and resolutions, particularly the party building ones.



Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we wonder why there is no mention in the invitational letter that the conference considered a draft resolution on party building, that it was the first resolution in the packet, that it set the context for all the others, and summed up the focus of the conference, and that this resolution was in the context of a key opening speech on party building. Further, we do not understand why the speech on party building was not distributed in the packet. We find it particularly disturbing that a key organizer for this forum did not even know as recently as 10 days ago that there even was a speech on party building.

In summary comrades, we don't think that these mistakes represent an effort to seek truth from facts and have the objective result, intentioned or not, of presenting a distorted picture of the conference to the tendency. To fail to understand that the context and focus of the conference was party building is to fail to understand what happened at the conference. We think the result is to ghettoize the conference suggesting 1) that it focused primarily on questions of race and sex rather than party building, or 2) that a general discussion of racism and sexism was taken up by minorities only.

Given this, we felt that it was incumbent on us as Marxist-Leninists to give more information about the conference tonight to correct these distortions. To do so we'd like to quote from the party building resolution and speech. From the resolution:

- Whereas, Party building is the central task facing the anti-revisionist communist movement in the U.S; and
- Whereas, within the context of party building our principle task at this time is to actively take up the theoretical struggle; and
- Whereas, left opportunism is the main error holding back the forward motion of the anti-revisionist movement of which there are four features:
  - 1) on the question of party building, ...
  - 2) in relation to the reform struggle, ...
  - 3) as regards the struggle for democratic rights, ...
  - 4) on the international question

From the speech on party building:

We came here today to take up the question of building a vanguard party dedicated to the overthrow of U.S. imperialism and the establishment of socialism here in the United States.

...

The perspective of the planning committee for this conference is that party building is the principle task facing Marxist-Leninists in the United States today, and in this context the theoretical struggle is the principle task.

In addition, I'd like comrades to know that the speech on party building addressed the history of our tendency, the pre-party period, some key failures of revisionism, the failure of the ultra-lefts to present a penetrating critique of revisionism in theory and practice, the relation of national minorities to Marxism-Leninism and party building, and the questions of the particular history and particular tasks of national minority Marxist-Leninists. I'd like to quote a few more passages and urge all of you to get and study the speech.

The liberation movements in socialist Cuba, Southeast Asia and Southern Africa also played a large part in bringing many activists to the realization that we must look closer at Marxism-Leninism. Our conscious development was first one of anti-imperialism. This objectively put many of us in a position of rooting for the communists, i.e. Fidel Castro, Ho Chi Minh, Amilcar Cabral, etc.; while essentially harboring anti-communist ideas. This contradiction forced many of us to take up the question of communism.

. . .

On the question of reform vs. revolution our comrades fail to grasp the dialectical relationship between reform and revolution and liquidate the reform struggle for revolution. They do not see the importance of winning the vanguard or the advanced who are leading the fight in the reform movements. They do not grasp the need to build an alliance between the petty bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

. . .

My presentation on party building today has been one for Marxist-Leninists. We do not believe there are any fundamental differences for national minority Marxist-Leninists and white Marxist-Leninists in party building movement. However, the struggle of the oppressed nationalities in the U.S. has placed the national minority objectively in the more advanced posture today. These advanced fighters are prepared to join our ranks once we take up the task of developing a system of politics and applying these politics. This important task cannot be achieved unless national minority Marxist-Leninists take up the task of party building.

. . .

Our perspective is, only a multi-national party can develop a correct strategy on the struggle against racism. Our failure to take up this task is to surrender to the bourgeoisie. To continue to stand outside the party building movement is objectively a posture of surrendering all hope for a socialist revolution and insuring the continuous rule of the bourgeoisie.

We have the speech on party building available here at our literature table and urge all comrades to buy it and study it.

(After the initial two comments by OC comrades, a member of the panel from the TWWA-Bay Area responded by stating that she was pleased that we had expressed our criticisms of the PC/NMMLC and the NSC/OCIC. She said that she saw this as a positive step on our part and offered her support to us for doing so. She stated that this was an indication that the OC members were finally taking up a criticism of the NMMLC. At that point, the following comment from an OC comrade was made.

The text below is a summary of what was said and not the actual text of the OC comrade's remark.)

I am quite surprised that the comrade from the TWWA was unaware of the existence of our criticisms of the PC and of the NSC/OCIC, since the organizers of this forum locally have been aware of these criticisms for some time. I am distressed that the forum organizers have failed to communicate their own knowledge of these criticisms to the visitors from the Bay Area. In addition, I am confused about one statement from a TWWA comrade which states that we in the OCIC have refused to struggle around the NMMLC. Let me address both of these points briefly.

In the first place, we have communicated our criticisms of the PC and of the NSC/OCIC to the local Rectification comrades in both a verbal form in meetings as far back as last June, and in a written form. These criticisms are certainly nothing new to the local organizers of this forum. At a recent meeting between a couple of us from the OCIC with several Rectification comrades, we reiterated our criticisms of the PC for the lateness of the summation of the NMMLC, our criticisms of the NSC for weak national guidance as to our role as OC members in promoting the NMMLC, our self-criticisms of our localism and objective racism in not following the progress of the NMMLC, and our criticisms of the local Rectification comrades for their unconradely methods of struggle around the NMMLC. To be sure that these criticisms were clear, we gave the Rectification comrades a paper detailing these remarks in a written form. We find it unfortunate that you (TWWA visitors) were not made aware of the existence of these criticisms in both their verbal and written form.

Secondly, I do not understand why the comrade from the TWWA stated that we in the OCIC have refused to struggle around the NMMLC. Again we are surprised that the local Rectification forces who have organized this forum failed to inform you that we here in Southern California have been willing to meet and discuss the NMMLC on numerous occasions. We met immediately with local Rectification comrades last summer as soon as they raised criticisms of the conference. At a later point we were contacted by a Rectification comrade and asked to get together to discuss their criticisms of the NMMLC further, but he specifically informed me on that occasion that we should only meet if we intended to unite with their (Rectificationist's) criticism that the NMMLC was sectarian because it presented only the party building perspective of the OCIC. At that time we responded that we would not unite with that criticism, and were then informed that it was unnecessary for us to get together. I do not think that we have been hesitant to meet with the Rectification forces locally around this question. What we have refused to do is meet on their (R/R's) terms. I thus find it very discouraging to come here and hear our role depicted as a non-struggle attitude, in spite of our efforts to carry on principled ideological struggle locally. I am distressed that the local Rectification forces who have organized this forum have "forgotten" to inform you that such a characterization is not/<sup>an</sup> accurate criticism of the OCIC forces here.

In addition, I want to respond to a comment from the chair of this meeting. I find it curious that this response to our criticism (that the party building speech from the NMMLC was not distributed to those invited to this forum) is that those organizing this forum were not aware of the existence of this speech. I am surprised at this remark because I myself sent it to him and he even phoned me to acknowledge the fact that it had arrived! Moreover, a couple of us from the OCIC met earlier this year with several organizers of this forum and discussed the party building speech!

What is particularly ironic about this situation is that we in the OCIC spent several meetings last summer with Rectification comrades hearing out their critique of the NMMLC as sectarian because it presented the party building perspective of the OCIC, and now these same comrades are raising a critique of the NMMLC for not taking up party building! It seems that the criticism has to be one way or the other, but I can't see how it can be both!

I am disheartened by the obfuscations that I have heard here tonight and am beginning to wonder if whatever role we in the OCIC play makes any difference at all to our Rectification comrades. What I have heard here tonight is not an accurate history of our part in taking up the criticisms from the local Rectification comrades around this conference."

(Following this remark from the OCIC comrade, a leading member of the local Rectification forces spoke. He stated that he was unaware of any paper from us outlining our criticisms of the NSC and of the PC, and reiterated the view that the local OCIC comrades had been unwilling to struggle around the NMMLC. There was not opportunity to respond to this comrade because he, and others, then moved the topic of discussion to the content of the speeches, using the justification that it was not fruitful to keep talking about "who said what when."

After the forum, however, the OCIC comrade confronted a member of the Rectification circle and asked why they had stated that they didn't have the paper? She responded that the particular comrade who had made this remark was in error and that he should have remembered the paper since he had participated in all the meetings at which it was discussed. She further stated that she had the paper, hadn't read it, nor had she bothered to distribute it to others in the circle (as she had been delegated to do). The comrade offered no self-criticism for the denial during the forum, and passed over my criticism as a "mere detail.")

TM

DW - Public Comments at Rectification Forum  
 on the National Minorities Marxist-Leninist  
 conference, held in Los Angeles, 1 March 1980

I don't know how good I can do on this question of content here. I unite with the fact that to some degree there are some formulations that are not too clear in these speeches and that there are some things that are treated rather matter of factly without being proven. But then the question becomes to me not can we refute them on the grounds that they have not been proven out if we're going to refute them first let's develop them. In other words some of the concepts in here everyone admits aren't fully developed. Well, before you're going to be able to refute them you're going to have to refute them on their strong points and not on its weak points or points that haven't been well developed.

To me this is a bit of sloppy methodology on your part so far in the sense that you say well the resolution on sexism is just stated rather matter of factly and not proven. Well, I agree with that. It's not proven. But it's put out as a hypothesis which in order to refute well, you almost have to develop it a little bit yourself.

To me the same thing is true on the question of the particular tasks of national minority Marxist-Leninists. I think that the particular tasks paper makes a number of contributions. I don't agree that it ghettoizes the tasks of national minority Marxist-Leninists. And that's why the party-building speech is so important and that's why people keep bringing it up because if you leave it out obviously the argument that the tasks are ghettoized is much easier to make than if you leave it in.

I don't feel the reasoning behind the particular tasks is real well developed. I unite with the fact that there are particular tasks for white communists and national minority Marxist-Leninists. And I think that the weakness of the speech in that regard is that it doesn't bring out the historical and theoretical foundation for the particular tasks as well as an insufficient treatment of the current reasons within the party building movement for why there are particular tasks.

I'm a little disturbed in the letter that you put out calling for this meeting that to a certain extent you pay lip service to the contributions of the Conference and have more of a desire to deal with its weaknesses and not to point out its strengths. There's too much of that going on. You're approaching it a little sloppy. It relates to the content.

For example, you all say you didn't get the party building speech from us. Well, we got the speeches on sexism and particular tasks from you all. We criticized the Planning Committee for being sloppy. That's an example of it. We assumed you had the party-building speech, so what you get more sloppy than that?

Here's something that is sloppier. Up until 2 days ago I was reading your version of the speech on sexism and this week I got the version from the National Steering Committee and it's not the same as the version that I had been studying. It's not re-written. I presume that version that you had was the version the comrade prepared to give but changed somewhat when they finally gave their presentation, particularly the part of the material basis of sexism...the whole thing about the division of labor in the family. That wasn't in the speech we got from you. I just found that out a couple of days ago. I don't know which one you circulated to everybody; but the sloppy theoretical work of trying to

refute the conclusions of this Conference before the Planning Committee has fully taken up its responsibilities puts you all in a fairly difficult dilemma, as well as us. But if you rush into it, I think you end up with some of the contradictions we are seeing tonite.

And I wanted to speak to a certain impatience with getting on with our tasks. It's in this sense here. You say we are paying lip-service to doing theoretical work. As I read the conclusions to the Conference, the final resolution here: "THEREFORE, be it resolved by this national conference of national minority Marxist-Leninists that 1) we recognize the necessity to take up these special tasks and address the theoretical aspects of each. first, to identify the principle contradiction that impedes the achievement of these goals, and second, to engage in theoretical study and debate to achieve a higher level of understanding of these questions and their resolutions."

Now you say nothing has happened in the last 10 months...I don't entirely agree with that but it has been very slow. But this is a characteristic of our movement. I mean everybody knows for example that the National Clubs of the Guardian existed for a year without any overall theoretical study plan. Well, does everybody therefore say that the National Clubs never took theory very seriously? No, we say that in the process of developing their knowledge they developed it deeper and eventually formed the National Network of Marxist-Leninist Clubs. But most of these comrades already had an interest in theory. So I think you can't try to discredit the comrades or the Planning Committee on the grounds that 10 months have passed and they haven't developed their positions. Well, I think it takes longer than that, although this shouldn't take away from the slowness in summarizing the Conference and in getting documents out.

Okay, I guess that's all for now.

Later in the forum I spoke again on the question of particular tasks. I ran out of tape and cannot recall all that I said. I am self-critical here because I had prepared to speak to this question, but when they did not come out and explicitly deny the existence of particular tasks, I failed to seize the initiative, point out objectively they were denying the existence of particular tasks (at least a number of the leading cadres in particular were) as were the others by maintaining some type of democratic centralism rather than standing on their own two feet and developing their positions as individuals.

My comments dealt with the historical and theoretical basis of particular tasks simplifying what is contained in the notes I took preparing for the forum. Basically I pointed out that the PC and the OCIC are not making particular tasks up, but there has long been recognized in the international communist movement and in the CPUSA in the 30s and 40's a division of labor between white and national and oppressed minorities. I discussed what this division of labor is and I pointed out that Haywood saw the breakdown in the basic division of labor as being a symptom of the development of revisionism in the Party in 1949.

DW  
21 April 80

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AS's Comments at the Forum

The comments summarized below built off of several earlier comments, and focused specifically on the theoretical weaknesses present in the two Rectification speeches. The reason for this specific focus was the fact that both Rectification speeches concentrated a fair amount of fire on the allegedly "low theoretical level" and "theoretical sloppiness" of the NMM-LC. The underlying assumption of these criticisms was the theoretical superiority of the Rectification Circle--something that was definitely not demonstrated by the speeches themselves. The following summary attempts to deepen the comments that were made at the forum, and to draw out their implications more clearly.

The first theoretical weakness cited was that the whole Rectificationist discussion of the conclusions of the NMM-LC separated a couple of the parts from the whole, dealt with only these parts out of the context of the whole, but at the same time pretended they were making a Marxist criticism of the whole. Concretely this was evidenced by the fact that the whole forum, including both of the speeches, ignored the centrality of party building to the whole NMM-LC, and attempted to only deal with the aspects of the Conference that addressed the particular tasks of national minority Marxist-Leninists in isolation--as if the whole NMM-LC hadn't been organized to strengthen the participation of national minority M-Ls in party building, as if the keynote speech and primary resolution hadn't stated that party building is the principal task for all M-Ls, including minorities, as if the whole emphasis on party building didn't underlay and condition everything else at the NMM-LC. During the forum, when a number of OC comrades pointed out that the Rectificationists were ignoring the party building emphasis of the NMM-LC, the Rectificationist response was to the effect that, OK you pointed that out (no self-criticism of course), but let's get down to discussing the two parts of the NMM-LC that are on the agenda. This response on their part simply compounded the error, for they continued to assume that the various parts of the NMM-LC could be separated and viewed in isolation, without thereby risking total misunderstanding of each part. Theoretically-speaking, the error here is empiricism.

The second theoretical weakness criticized by this comment surrounded the way that the Rectificationists used the concept "principal contradiction" in their criticism of the NMM-LC speech and resolution on sexism. The NMM-LC position in this regard was crystal clear: "sexism is the principal contradiction among minority Marxist-Leninists." However, for the Rectificationists it seems, there can only be one principal contradiction, and by saying that the principal contradiction among national minorities is sexism necessarily means that minority communists faced a different principal contradiction than Anglo communists (the latter being, according to the Rectificationists "the lack of a party"). Moreover the second Rectificationist speech somehow argued that the NMM-LC position on sexism among national minority M-Ls meant that the NMM-LC held that minority males were more sexist than white males (also clearly not the position taken in the NMM-LC speech). The error here is that the Rectificationist comrades handled the concept "principal contradiction" in an extremely mechanical and "sloppy" manner. Marxism posits that in any process containing more than one contradiction, one of these contradictions must be the principal one; the NMM-LC speech argued that in the complex and contradictory process of relations between minority communists, sexism is principal. Further, Marxist philosophy proposes that larger processes can be comprised of a number of smaller processes, each of the latter containing a principal contradiction--but the principal contradiction of the larger process need not be the same as the principal contradiction of any one of the smaller processes. In line with this, the NMM-LC speech, while arguing that sexism is the principal contradiction in the "smaller" process of relations among minority M-Ls, emphatically does not argue sexism is the principal contradiction in the "larger" process of relations among all M-Ls, nor does it argue that minority M-Ls when considered in the context of the "larger" process of relations among all M-Ls face a different principal contradiction than the others in that "larger" process. In fact, the position of the NMM-LC was that party building is the main task of all communists including minority communists, which, if we shift terminology, seems pretty similar

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to the Rectificationists own position that lack of a party is the principal contradiction for all communists (is this another example of the Rectificationist tendency to frantically find differences where there are none?). Finally, dialectical-materialist logic in no way implies that the character of the principal contradiction in one process tells us anything about the character of a similar contradiction in another process--that is, the Rectificationists were in outer space (or at least outside of the realm of Marxist logic) when they claimed that the NMM-LC position on sexism among minorities necessarily implied that minority males were more sexist than Anglo males. The crude and mechanical handling of the concept "principal contradiction" in particular, and of dialectics in general, by the Rectificationists at the forum seems to continue the tradition of the ultra-leftists who are famous for their heroic debates over the "principal contradiction" and for their failure to clearly specify what process was being discussed, the relationship of that process and its contradictions to other processes, the relationship of principal contradictions to secondary contradictions. Like the ultra-lefts, the Rectificationists were making a dogmatist error in this regard.

The third theoretical weakness criticized in this comment was the way that the Rectificationists handled the concept of "particular tasks." The argument here is similar to the one made around the second weakness above. The Rectificationists felt that the NMM-LC, by proposing particular tasks for minority M-Ls, was therefore proposing that these were the primary tasks of minority M-Ls, and that the effect of this was to "ghettoize" and separate the activity of minority M-Ls from Anglo M-Ls. Since the NMM-LC clearly did not propose this, for, again, the cornerstone of the whole Conference was that party building was primary for all M-Ls, something else is operating here. And that "something else" is a theoretical confusion on the Rectificationists' part of particular tasks with primary tasks. But this confusion goes a step further: there was an undertone at the forum, that has been more clearly articulated by some local Rectificationists on other occasions, that if the primary tasks are the same for all M-Ls, it is incorrect to concentrate at all on the particular tasks of some M-Ls (it is almost as if thinking about particular tasks undermines our ability to carry out the primary tasks). Politically such a position, if carried to its logical extension, would prevent any division of responsibility within the communist movement (we all have the same primary tasks and the particular tasks are unimportant). Theoretically such a position appears to be a reproduction of the old ultra-leftist approach of only seeing the primary tasks, and forgetting the secondary (particular) tasks, of only concentrating on the primary contradiction, and liquidating the secondary ones. This mechanistic and dogmatist approach to dialectics is one philosophic deviation that we should all concentrate on "rectifying."

The final theoretical weakness addressed in this comment was the Rectificationist attempt--and this was the main theme of the second forum speech--to force every real or imagined difference that Rectificationists have with those friendly to the OC line into the mold of the Great Debate Between Rectification and Fusion. The pattern is this: the Rectificationists describe the real or imagined difference; they then ASSERT that it is a characteristic of the fusion line; which they then ASSERT is the guiding line of the OCIC (or in this case, the NMM-LC). Further: they ASSERT, on almost every occasion, that these differences are just more "evidence" of the bankruptcy of the fusion line--a line, they ASSERT, that is collapsing (it is always collapsing...for years it has been collapsing). There is seldom an attempt to argue theoretically or *even* empirically the links between these assertions, and when such arguments are presented they are usually more abstract assertions (everybody knows that fusion is "economism"... or "mechanical materialism"...or...). There are a number of problems with this Rectificationist line of argument, the main one being that neither the OC, nor the NMM-LC, is guided by the fusion line. And, again, they have never been able to demonstrate, beyond the string of assertions, that either the OC or the NMM-LC is "fusionist." For example, given that the Rectificationists understand fusion to hold that spontaneous immersion in mass practice is the primary task in party building, they have never explained how it can be that the OC sees the theoretical-ideological process of line development as primary and in fact dedicates itself to this task alone. Relatedly, they have



never been able to explain how the OC is an implementation of the principle of the separation of the centers for the direction of mass practice, and the center for ideological and theoretical struggle. Nor how it is that the OC does not attempt to guide mass practice. The only attempted Rectificationist explanation of these "apparent" contradictions with their view of the OC as fusionist (again, using their definition of fusion--which to say the least is of debatable accuracy) is to argue that the fusion line is constantly being adjusted, or even contradicting itself (which, of course, is further evidence of its process of collapse). What must be concluded is that Rectificationists have a tremendous will to believe--against all logic and evidence--that "fusion" guides the OC, the NCM-LC. And to say the obvious, concluding beforehand what the character of a situation is, then rigidly claiming that every "fact" supports this conclusion, is an essential characteristic of dogmatism.

Finally the forum comment attempted to identify the political impulse that corresponded to, and helped to motivate the theoretical errors cited (at the forum, however, this was not drawn out well). This impulse took the form of a desire on the part of the Rectificationists to cast the NCM-LC in the most negative possible light--to search hard for any possible weakness or disagreement with the NCM-LC, then blow these up into the most earth-shaking criticisms possible. The motive here was quite clearly to claim and "demonstrate" the superiority of the Rectificationist line, approach, and circle at every turn. The tragedy of this approach was that much of the first speech--Linda Burham's--could have been posed as an attempt (a somewhat successful one) to build off and deepen the conclusions of the NCM-LC, not as an attempt to prove that the NCM-LC was a step backwards. This sectarian impulse of the Rectificationists is familiar to those of us in the OC, for we have seen these comrades continually overemphasize their real and imagined differences with the OC, and continually insist on making secondary disagreements with certain forces in the OC primary. The NSC of the OCIC has quite correctly identified this Rectificationist impulse as an out growth of the circle spirit, which, in essence, causes Rectificationists to put the primary emphasis on consolidating their own circle, and launching a quest for circle hegemony over the tendency. The unity of the tendency, in an effort to concentrate our best theoretical resources on line development, suffers from the Rectificationist circle thrust. And, as evidenced by the forum speeches, the Rectificationist circle impulse causes them to commit and magnify theoretical errors to which they are prone.

AS 4/14/80

Some Thoughts on The Question of  
Particular Tasks of Marxist-Leninists

In no country have racist theories played such a hegemonic role as in the United States. For this reason we can say that the United States is the ideological center for the propagation of racist theories. The deep roots of racism in American history reflects itself in the ranks of the communists. The history of the CPUSA demonstrates that the Party had to consistently fight to free its members from the poison of white chauvinism. One of the traditions from the CPUSA which we do not want to rectify prior to the mid 50's is the tradition of services of the CPUSA in its long and relentless fight against the deadly poison and divisive force of white chauvinism. Whereas other organizations speaking in the name of the working class virtually ignored the question of white chauvinism, the penetrating analysis of white chauvinism developed by the CPUSA demonstrates a vanguard character and stands in the lead of exposing the full centrality of racism in the U.S.A. Near the end of life William Z. Foster drew this conclusion in the book the Negro People in American History. He concluded that "the thoroughgoing Marxist-Leninist analysis of white chauvinism made by Communist writers stands in the front ranks of American political writing."

The working out of revisionist and dogmatist errors in the CPUSA, the attempt at reestablishment up through the new communist movement has meant that we have not yet mastered and enriched systematically this "thorough-going Marxist-Leninist analysis."

"Every lynch mob, every race riot that has disgraced our nation has had white chauvinism as its ideological driving force. Race hatred, injected among the toilers by the exploiters, saturates the government, industries, churches, schools, theatres, movies, press, radio, television, and all other capitalist controlled insituations. From long propagation it also subtly permeates our national language, customs, and habits. White chauvinism is a cancerous disease in American culture. Large section of the working class, constantly subjected to this flood of intellectual filth, are also more or less afflicted with it. It is white chauvinism that lies behind tendencies to bar Negro workers from jobs, from union membership and leadership, from friendly social relationships." The effect of this on the communist movement has been such that except for brief periods and sporadic struggles white communists have too often allowed themselves to be steered away from serious activism on the black liberation front or other minority struggles. Thus it to say that manifestations of white chauvinism inside the party's ranks always had as an accompaniment a neglect of the struggle against white chauvinism among the masses.

Within the CPUSA there was all too prevalent especially among white comrades a tolerant or liberal attitude toward manifestations of chauvinism. In practice the worst expression of this is that acts of racism and chauvinism are first raised not by the white comrades but by the national minority comrades. Even after these acts are exposed too often it has been the national minority comrades that have had to carry the burden of the struggle against them. Too often white comrades exhibited an excessive concern that individuals criticized and disciplined for acts of chauvinism would be harmed and thereby succumbed to the liberalism inherent in putting personal concerns above political ones, when in fact racist behavior is political whether it occurs in your private or public life.

When we situate these lessons in the history of our attempts to build a communist party in the 1980's we can see that passivity on grasping the centrality of the struggle against racism is an important reason why minorities are insufficiently represented in the party building movement. Without the centrality of this struggle being grasped Marxist-Leninist multinational unity will not be achieved.

It is in this context one of the lessons from the history of the CPUSA which we want to apply is the lesson that is particularly and especially the responsibilities of white communists to ~~the~~ struggle against white

chauvinism, and the particular responsibility of minority communists to struggle against petty-bourgeois reformism and narrow nationalism. It is important to understand that this is not something that the maker of this speech, the Planning Committee of the OCIC is making up. Any true adherent to the concept of rectification should support this formulation about the particular responsibility of particular Marxist-Leninists. If we study the history of the Party we can find this formulation propagated in different words over a long period of time. It is basic Marxist-Leninism as applied to the United States.

The struggle against white chauvinism is the primary responsibility of whites because they are the main but not exclusive carrier of this poison into the communist ranks, just as minorities are the main carriers of narrow nationalism. The CPUSA concluded that the elimination of white chauvinism is the duty of all communists, but that it is the special responsibility of white party members. To deny that in principle there could be no particular responsibilities for Marxist-Leninists of different races or nationalities is to separate the general from the specific and theory from practice. To say that a national minority has a particular task or a task that he or she bears more responsibility for than a white Marxist-Leninist in no way liquidates the responsibility of all communists to struggle against the same deviations or errors. In real life we are always assigning particular tasks to various people ~~within~~ within communist organizations and think that the wide division of labor a large disciplined organization can offer is a way to put our talents to work. Or we say that every Marxist-Leninist must practice criticism-self-criticism, but then we also say that leadership especially or particularly must be good at criticism and self-criticism.

In conclusion I would argue that to deny the need and validity of the concept of particular tasks for Marxist-Leninists is dogmatism out-and-out. To be real clear the legacy we should accept is as follows: In the process of winning the people to communism a division of labor between white communists and national and oppressed minorities was developed. The primary duty of white communists is to bring the struggle against white chauvinism to the white workers to actually win them to the struggle against national and racial oppression. For Communists of the oppressed nationalities, the task is to fight national aloofness and in national minorities to actively unite with white workers in the class struggle.

This division of labor was seen as a basic foundation for the multi-national unity of the party. There can be no principled and lasting multi-national unity if whites neglect the struggle against white chauvinism or the national minority and oppressed minority comrades do not combat narrow nationalism.

The importance of this historical division of labor within the Party is given such importance by Harry Haywood in his autobiography Black Bolshevik that one of the reasons he concludes the struggle against white chauvinism in 1949 was a "phony war" is because the 'chief prosecutor' was a black rather than a white. While I doubt I would agree with his conclusion his comments on the effects of the breakdown in this communist division of labor are useful: "The growth of the nationalist side of this distortion was directly linked to the breakdown of the basic division of labor among communists in relation to the national question. This division of labor, long ago established in our Party and the international communist movement, places main responsibility for combating white chauvinism on the white comrades, with Blacks having main responsibility for combating narrow nationalist deviations."

"When Pettis Perry came forward as the 'chief prosecutor' of white chauvinists this division of tasks, so essential to building firm unity of the races, was clearly violated. On the one hand it allowed the leading white comrades to abdicate their responsibilities in fighting chauvinism and rallying white workers in defense of Black rights; while on the other, it left Perry and other leading blacks as the 'defenders' of Blacks against white chauvinists. The dangers of narrow nationalism were ignored." (588)

One of the polemical weaknesses of the Particular Tasks of National Minority Marxist-Leninist paper and speech is that it does not prove the case sufficiently

remnants of white chauvinism are rooted out. Every comrade must fight against every manifestation of enemy ideology within the communist ranks. But we must see that the facts of life pose the main tasks differently for different comrades. What is this but a recognition of a party spirit, of the recognition that comrades often have acquired their communist convictions by different routes and that ~~we~~ we must develop through an ideological center a harmony through a division of labor, or as Lenin says "a really harmonious ensemble of leaders", that "we need a vast orchestra; and we must acquire experience in order to correctly to distribute the parts, in order to know to whom to assign the sentimental violin, to whom the gruff double-bass, to whom the conductor's baton..." (Letter to Iskra, CW, vol. 7, 118). Are those who would deny the existence of particular tasks of Marxist-Leninists trying to put together a vast orchestra or are they simply opposing what the OCIC supports? The Resolution on Racism and Sexism contains some formulations on particular tasks I do not think I agree with, but insofar as the thesis is developed that the poisonous mixture of racism and sexism is the main reason there are too few national minority women in the party building movement we must recognize as a very positive statement. We must recognize we are dealing with male superiority in addition to white chauvinism. This is an "unacceptable theoretical level" only to those who lack the patience and party spirit to cure the illness to save the patient or who put the polemical interests of their circle above the interests of the communist and worker's and oppressed and national minority movements.

The interests of the party building movement require it to take up a rectification campaign, an ideological campaign against white chauvinism. Contrary to the rectificationist line I would argue that the white comrades in our tend should attempt to assume a particular responsibility in this campaign, and that to the degree that this campaign attains some success we will in fact see that the national minority comrades will be in fact carrying out their particular task in the struggle against nationalism with more enthusiasm. As we say the rectification must be two-fold.

One of the important foundations for the concept of particular tasks of Marxist-Leninists is the vanguard theory of the party itself. Clarence Hathaway in his summary for the prosecution of Yokenin argued against clemency on the grounds of the vanguard character of the party. "You have to bear in mind that the Communist Party is not merely an organization of workers; it is the organization of the advance-guard of the working class. The Communist Party has the task of organizing and leading the working class as a whole in a revolutionary struggle against American capitalism. And it has to lead this struggle under the most trying circumstances, and will have to meet the greatest obstacles before we reach our goal - the overthrow of the American capitalist system and the establishment here of a government of workers. This is by no means an easy task. ~~It~~ It is going to require men with iron determination to carry through this task. And, comrades, for that reason we cannot have inside of such an organization elements that are wobbly, that are not ready to take a decisive stand on this question of white chauvinism."

"On this issue of white chauvinism depends the whole question of our ability to organize Negro and white workers in common struggle, just as soon as we bring a Negro worker into our Party or into any of the mass organizations around our Party and this Negro worker meets the slightest indication of a chauvinist attitude, he becomes more convinced than ever that his mistrust of the whites is justified. For that reason, comrades, our Party must be kept clear of white chauvinist tendencies. We must retain in our Party only those elements who are ready to stand four square on this issue." (Race Hatred on Trial, Proceedings of Yokenin Trial).

"The mistrust of whites." This is one of those cases and countries where an idea has become a material force, or rather a material condition reflects an ideology. The paper on the Particular Tasks of National Minority Marxist Leninists to some extent I think understates some of the national aspects of oppression are more deeply involved in the lack of participation of national minorities in the party building movement.

"The age-long oppression of colonial and weak nationalities by the imperialist powers has imbued the roiling masses of the oppres countries, not only with anger, but also with distrust toward the oppressing nations in general, including the proletariat of those nations." (Lin, SW v 19, p. 232)

We have learned from Lenin in Stalin than in dealing with oppressed peoples communists must keep in mind that these peoples as a result of centuries-long historical experience with super-exploitation and oppression, have developed moods of suspicion and hatred which they tend to direct not only against the oppressing classes, but against the whole oppressor people. Thus what some comrades call national minorities' "over-sensitivity" to questions of racism and white-chauvinism is in fact rooted in history. This makes it necessary for Communists from the oppressor nations to follow a course which is a special course and which will win for communists the fullest confidence and co-operation of the oppressed masses. For communists who are white not to struggle against every crass and subtle form of white chauvinism is to fail the test of solidarity and to fail to overcome the distrust, doubt and suspicion which exists and acts as an obstacle to class unity.

We can thus see that over such a question as whether or not Marxist-Leninists have particular tasks lies at the very heart of a correct approach to building a multi-national vanguard party. Any denial that national minorities have particular tasks will constitute a fundamental obstacle to the elaboration of Marxism-Leninism to our conditions. The paper on The Particular Tasks of National Minority Marxist-Leninists states that the objective existence of racism as the principal division in the working class is the main reason that Marxist-Leninists have these particular tasks. It also states that there are two other reasons why n.m. Marxist-Leninists have some particular tasks 2) the political errors of the revisionists and dogmatists and 3) the current composition of the organized party building movement. It begins with acceptance of the communist division of labor and based on an analysis of why the movements of the oppressed nationalities and the workers movement remain separate, and correctly concludes that the main danger to working class unity is white chauvinism. The two main factors impeding multi-national unity in our tend which are discussed and the particular tasks which are drawn from this analysis constitute an attempt to apply and enrich this theory of a division of labor. "In summary, the reason for our particular tasks is rooted in the prevailing role that racism plays in impeding the development of a revolutionary movement in the U.S." I believe it is possible to disagree with parts of the analysis in the speech, or to disagree with one or two of its conclusions and still regard as a very positive presentation and very insightful.

Where do I stand on the 4 particular tasks that are seen? These tasks are:

1. To unite the struggles of the oppressed national minorities with the working class movement;
2. To win over advanced national minorities to communism
3. To struggle for unity between national minority communities; and
4. To struggle against narrow nationalism.

I don't feel the theoretical base of any of the 4 tasks is deeply and sufficiently spelled out and that this is particularly true for the 1st and 2nd tasks. I question whether tasks 1 and 2 are in fact particular tasks of national minority Marxist-Leninists. The argument that has been made does not convince me that task no. 1 is not equally a task for all Marxist-Leninists and I would say the same thing about task 2, although there is a lot of confusion I have here. Tasks no. 3 and 4. I think are correct. There is one other particular task which is put forward and that is contained in the Resolution: "1) taking up the struggle against sexism as the principle contradiction among and between national-minority Marxist-Leninists in the present period."

I don't believe the argument for this is made sufficiently either, but a good beginning case is made and this is quite possibly a correct conclusion. Based on what has already been said about the roots of the "particularities question" I see no problem in saying that there can be a different principal contradiction between and among national minority-Marxist-Leninists and white-Marxist-Leninists.

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In conclusion, as a way of taking gains of the National Minority Marxist Leninist Conference I would suggest all Marxist-Leninists should "recognize the necessity to up these special tasks and address the theoretical aspects of each, first, to identify the principle contradiction that impeded the achievement of these goals, and second, to engage in theoretical study and debate to achieve a higher level of understanding of these questions and their resolutions." The comrades who will be studying white chauvinism as part of the work of the National Theoretical Work Committee should pay particular attention to these 5 tasks as they do their studies and try to achieve a higher level of understanding of the theoretical aspects of them. And, indeed, in some ~~particular~~ cases to question whether they are accurate.

In addition I would suggest that we have a responsibility to defend and develop those particular tasks which we can strongly stand behind. In particular the materials on white chauvinism contain a wealth of knowledge about the struggle against narrow nationalism. The further centralization of this material on narrow nationalism would be a worthwhile task for someone to take up during the course of the white chauvinism study.

A final note of caution. Nowhere does the paper on the Particular Tasks of National Minority Marxist-Leninists say that particular tasks are the only tasks, the most important task, or only the tasks of national minorities. Any attempt on the part of Rectificationists should simply be refuted on the factual level. All of these tasks are placed in the context of party building and in relation to party building theoretical tasks receive primary emphasis. In this sense the spearhead of their critique of the particular tasks is their downplaying of the speech on party building and the context in which the speech is given. Therefore in correcting whatever distortions they may make we should realize that the key to their strategy will be their dogmatism, and we should continually try to point out the root ideological source of their positions which deny the particular context in which the speech and resolutions are made, as well as the need for demarcating particular tasks.

D.W.

28 Feb. 1980

Note: This paper is not well organized and represents a very sketchy attempt to develop my own thinking which is not yet well developed. I hope it will help orient comrades to some of the line struggle.

I also meant to say that it is important to keep in mind what is not being said in the paper on particular tasks. The speech and resolutions do not say that national minorities organize national minorities and whites organize whites. This is an idealist leftover from new left days and we should not let them pretend something of this sort is being said. Some of my confusion on task no. 2 stems from this thinking.