

What methods do revisionists use to seize power in a communist party?

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(This text, closing words, was included in a booklet, "Concentrate correct ideas", which has never been published publicly before and which was only circulated internally during the party struggle within SKP¹ in 1978 – 1980.)

It is important to learn from the past. There was a struggle between the two lines, the Marxist-Leninist line and the modern revisionist line, in virtually every communist party after the Second World War. In several cases, the parties gradually began to degenerate already during the World War, or committed very serious errors, even open treason against the liberation struggle and the revolution, like the Greek communist party.

The most serious setback occurred within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), where the modern revisionist line, led by Nikita Khrushchev, succeeded in seizing power in 1956 after a hard struggle for three years following Stalin's death. Most Communist parties followed suit, and even supported the revisionist takeover of the CPSU. Some communist parties, notably the Communist Party of China, stuck to the Marxist-Leninist line.

The explanation of why so many Communist parties fell victim to modern revisionism is, of course, complex. The only thing that is interesting in this context is their methods, and their attitude towards democratic centralism and the open struggle of opinion.

The most common denominator of the revisionists was that they opposed democratic centralism and the open struggle of opinion, and that they instead applied bureaucratic centralism and used organizational measures, primarily disciplinary measures, to resolve differences of opinion. The degree of action depended on the degree of resistance.

Thus, in the CPSU, the battle between the Marxist-Leninist line and the modern revisionist line raged in the Central Committee between 1953-1956 and was not settled until the 1956 CPSU congress. It is a fact that the struggle ebbed and flowed within the Central Committee – at one point even Molotov, Malenkov and Kaganovich had achieved a majority in the Politburo (i.e. the equivalent of the SKP executive committee) and deposed Khrushchev as General Secretary. But Khrushchev set aside the Politburo, called a meeting of the Central Committee himself, and the top leaders of the army and the KGB arranged for the Khrushchev-

¹ SKP: Sweden's Communist Party (Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti)

loyal members of the Central Committee to be flown to this meeting. Those who supported the Marxist-Leninist line, represented by Molotov and others, could not count on the same service, and consequently Khrushchev managed to win a majority at this Central Committee meeting. Molotov, Malenkov and Kaganovich were deposed, and the purges of those party members in the CPSU who adhered to the Marxist-Leninist line, to the teachings of Lenin and Stalin, also began in earnest.

The decisive error of the leading representatives of the Marxist-Leninist line, i.e., Molotov, Malenkov and Kaganovich, was that they consistently kept the contradictions within the Central Committee, even in the position of a temporary majority in the Politburo, instead of mobilizing the party members in open struggle. It is too late to mobilize the members of a communist party when the revisionists have already seized power in the leadership, strangled the internal party debate, i.e. the possibility of correcting the wrong line, and succeeded in purging all the party members who represent a Marxist-Leninist line. This means, therefore, that the Marxist-Leninists must launch the open struggle before the Communist Party has become revisionist. Otherwise it is too late. This was also what Mao Zedong understood; this was the lesson he drew from the negative developments in the Soviet Union and the rise to power of revisionism and; this is why he formulated the theory of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution to prevent the rise to power of revisionism in China and put himself at the head of this movement. Whatever the secondary errors – they may amount to 30, 40 percent – that were committed during the Cultural Revolution, it can never be re-evaluated so that it becomes primarily negative.

It was also obvious that Molotov, Malenkov and Kaganovich fell by the wayside after they had lost in the Central Committee, because they survived and survived with retreat posts, subordinating themselves to the modern revisionist line.

During the Second World War, the Greek communist party openly betrayed the Greek people, let in the British army, even though almost the whole country was liberated from the Nazis, and then made the Greek resistance lay down its arms. This was only possible because the revisionists in the leadership took advantage of the illegality and abnormal conditions of the Second World War to completely abolish internal party democracy, to use intimidation methods against those who were hesitant and to gradually hijack the opposition which was growing against the policy pursued with disciplinary measures.

In Sweden, the same struggle between the Marxist-Leninist and the modern revisionist line was going on in Sweden's Communist Party² between 1943-53, which

² Sweden's Communist Party here refers to Sweden's old Comintern party, which changed names in 1967. The author of this document was in another party which took the name SKP (Sweden's Communist Party) in 1973.

led to the isolation of the leading Marxist-Leninist Set Persson both in the Central Committee and at the 1953 congress. The decisive error committed by Set Persson was that he likewise did not ensure in time that the contradictions were brought to the attention of the party members so that they could be mobilized; instead, he himself kept the contradictions for the longest time within the Central Committee, until he was indeed isolated within it. No one can struggle alone, not even a leader like Set Persson – conversely, the majority, even in a communist party, cannot fight without leadership and a leader. Lenin's words, directed at anarchists and "left"-communists who felt that the masses did not need leaders, are also applicable to the internal party struggle in the Communist Party:

“... not a single class in history has achieved power without producing its political leaders, its prominent representatives able to organize a movement and lead it” (quoted from Material to the Question of Stalin, Norwegian edition, p.14).

Since the members of Sweden's Communist Party were in no way mobilized in the struggle against the modern revisionist line, it was no coincidence that Set Persson was also completely isolated at the 1953 congress. Only one congress delegate supported him, and that was on the question of whether Set Persson had any right at all to have a separate opinion from the majority of the Central Committee!

The revisionist Hagberg-Linderot-Lager³ faction also never intended to give Set Persson any opportunity to mobilize party members for his line. On the contrary, they planned his imminent expulsion from the party and therefore Set Persson left voluntarily, rather than being expelled. Those members of the SKP who demanded that Set Persson's congress speech be published, so that all party members could study it, were expelled without pardon. When Set Persson himself sent out his speech to some party members, the party leadership called on their base organizations to, "with indignation", denounce this course of action. When this did not help, the revisionist leaders "planted" Set Persson's congress speech on the editor's tables of the bourgeois and social democratic newspapers and then accused Set Persson of having sent his speech to the press. This was a nasty trick, a common provocation, to try to divert the members' attention from the contradictions on the issues.

It has never been the case in history that a correct line automatically wins or that it has won without a struggle. On the contrary, a correct line can only develop in struggle against incorrect lines.

Nothing can be achieved without sacrifice, nothing is risk-free and victory is often preceded by temporary setbacks. In the struggle for Marxism-Leninism Mao Zedong

³ Other people in the party leadership with Set Persson. Linderot was Chairman of the party 1929-1951, Hagberg was Chairman 1951-1964.

Thought within Sweden's Communist Party, in the struggle to defend the Marxist-Leninist line of the second congress of Sweden's Communist Party and to prevent the new party right from liquidating Sweden's Communist Party, certain principles must be kept in mind, certain theories of the internal party struggle must be completely refuted, otherwise a victory of the Marxist-Leninist line is impossible within Sweden's Communist Party:

I. Principle politics are the only correct politics.

The core issue in the struggle against a modern revisionist and liquidationist line, which has a majority in the leadership, is to stick to a Marxist-Leninist line and dare to struggle, dare to win. Zhou Enlai gave a brilliant summary of this attitude at the Tenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China on August 24-28, 1973:

“There were many instances in the past where one tendency covered another and when a tide came, the majority went along with it, while only a few withstood it. Today, in both international and domestic struggles, tendencies may still occur similar to those of the past, namely, when there was an alliance with the bourgeoisie, necessary struggles were forgotten and when there was a split with the bourgeoisie, the possibility of an alliance under given conditions was forgotten. It is required of us to do our best to discern and rectify such tendencies in time. And when a wrong tendency surges towards us like a rising tide, we must not fear isolation and must dare to go against the tide and brave it through. Chairman Mao states, 'Going against the tide is a Marxist-Leninist principle.' In daring to go against the tide and adhere to the correct line in the ten struggles between the two lines within the Party, Chairman Mao is our example and teacher.” (p. 11)

The ongoing struggle in Sweden's Communist Party is child's play compared with the battles which may be fought in the not too distant future. The danger of a third world war is constantly growing. If Sweden is attacked by the Soviet superpower, a prolonged and protracted resistance and the development of a people's war, presupposes that the members of the communist party dare to take the lead in the struggle and dare to struggle with their lives at stake.

What does a party member risk today if he pursues principled struggle against the liquidators? At most, loss of party membership. But losing party membership is nothing definitive. It is not the same as losing your livelihood, but rather the same as catching a cold. Colds usually pass. If the liquidators expel enough party members, so that the opposition would have no chance whatsoever of winning at the party's third congress, this will be turned into its opposite. Then the opposition will be forced to re-form the communist party.

If you do not pursue clear politics from the start, it is impossible to spread and achieve clarity in the party as a whole. That is why one has to come up with "theories" along the lines of not "clashing with the middle group". This "theory" is based on short-term calculations and the idea that in the internal party struggle one must always strive for a majority in any given situation. However, in order to win a final victory in the internal party struggle, one must start from correct principled politics from the outset and always draw a sharp dividing line against the opportunists. It is impossible to dally with correct principle politics and make concessions and compromises with liquidators in matters of principle. Such a "middle road" line always leads to defeat, or as Stalin writes:

“The fact of the matter is that contradictions can be overcome only by means of a struggle for definite principles, for definite aims of the struggle, for definite methods of waging the struggle leading to the desired aim. One can, and should, agree to any compromise with dissenters in the Party on questions of current policy, on questions of a purely practical nature. But if these questions are connected with disagreements based on principle, no compromise, no "middle" line can save the situation. There can be no "middle" line in questions of principle. Either one set of principles or another must be made the basis of the Party's work. A "middle" line in matters of principle is the "line" of stuffing people's heads with rubbish, of glossing over disagreements, a "line" leading to the ideological degeneration of the Party, to the ideological death of the Party.”
(J. V. Stalin in *Once More on the Social-Democratic Deviation in Our Party* - FFLPFS Moscow 1955, p. 6)

2. "The majority is always right!" is a revisionist line.

Democratic centralism means combining the greatest possible democracy within the party with strict uniformity of external action. An "iron discipline", to use Stalin's phrase, can only be conscious. This view was best formulated by Mao Zedong:

“What is centralism? First of all it is a centralization of correct ideas, on the basis of which unity of understanding, policy, planning, command and action are achieved. This is called centralized unification. If people still do not understand problems, if they have ideas but have not expressed them, or are angry but still have not vented their anger, how can centralized unification be established? If there is no democracy we cannot possibly summarize experience correctly. If there is no democracy, if ideas are not coming from the masses, it is impossible to establish a good line, good general and specific policies and methods.” (quoted from *Marxistiskt Forum* No. 6/78)

But, if the majority in the leadership – or the majority in the party at all – does not respect party democracy or the party statutes, but overrides them, introduces step by step a bureaucratic centralism, makes an open exchange of views as difficult as possible and violates the rights of the members and the minority, does one have the right to override these majority decisions?

The logic which claims that a majority in the leadership of the Communist Party can put itself above the party's statutes, undermine the party democracy at will and violate the rights of the minority in the leadership as well as the rights of the members in the party in general, but that the minority in the leadership and the members of the party cannot put themselves above these decisions despite the violation of party democracy, the non-application of the party statutes and the violation of the rights of the minority and members, is downright revisionist.

This logic means that once opportunists have gained a majority in the leadership of the Communist Party, they can do exactly anything. The minority in the leadership and the party members must submit to these majority decisions at all costs – it doesn't matter what is decided. If the members of SKP are to go with the "tide", then they will go down in the "tide".

An opportunist majority in the leadership of the Communist Party will thus be able, by virtue of its majority, to overturn party democracy, in practice to repeal the statutes and to violate the rights of the minority and of the members, who, however, will calmly submit to this. This is a convenient logic for revisionists. In fact, it is political suicide for Marxist-Leninists to accept or in practice submit to this logic.

It is right and necessary to take up the struggle from the first moment against a partisan current which attacks the basis of democratic centralism and makes an open struggle of opinion impossible. It is a question of principle that the struggle must be raised – the exact time, the exact opportunity, however, is a question of suitability, a tactical question. Unless a determined struggle is waged against the rise of bureaucratic centralism, the communist party will be liquidated, because bureaucratic centralism is a means, a lever, for otherwise revisionist politics. Better then:

“But the party can still be split if the party leadership seeks dictatorially to keep the members in a 'blind party discipline', in order to lead the party astray by means of it. Then, sooner or later, the split of opinion which already exists in the party will turn into the situation of which Lenin wrote that ‘a split is better than confusion which impedes the ideological, theoretical and revolutionary growth and maturing of the party and its harmonious, really organized; practical work which actually paves the way for the dictatorship of the proletariat.’” (Set Persson in Who is abusing the enemy press?)

3. It is right to organize the members of the communist party in defense of the Marxist-Leninist line – it is only the liquidators who divide.

At a time when the existence of the communist party is threatened, when party democracy has been undermined, the statutes are being suspended and the rights of the minority, or members, are being violated, the Marxist-Leninists must organize the defense of the Marxist-Leninist line. Then it is no longer possible to turn the other cheek. It is the same as passively awaiting defeat.

What is the platform of the Marxist-Leninists? It is to defend Marxism-Leninism Mao Zedong Thought and the line of the second congress. The line of the second congress is the line of Sweden's Communist Party, the current party line. The Marxist-Leninists in Sweden's Communist Party have never tried to hide the fact that this is their platform. They have always fought openly for their line, but the liquidators have, since January 1978, tried to make it as difficult as possible for the Marxist-Leninist positions to reach all party members.

It is the new party right that are the real dividers. They have established a liquidationist platform, contrary to the line of the second congress, and seized power in the Party Executive Committee in January 1978 – not by openly mobilizing the members for their line – but by dividing, coterieism and intrigue, in short by a coup. Their leading representatives have been engaged in dividing efforts since the second congress, taking internal contradictions outside the party and coordinating their dividing activities with outside, non-party members.

Today they have no qualms about winning back supporters of Bo Gustafsson/Sture Ring's⁴ modern revisionist faction. In fact, the new party right is acting as a regular faction against Sweden's Communist Party by establishing a liquidationist platform, attacking the foundations of democratic centralism and the open struggle of opinion.

The defense of the line of the second congress, the defense of party democracy and the open struggle of opinion, can therefore never be described as dividing efforts. It is as legitimate and honorable as fighting courageously and resolutely against foreign occupiers who have taken over Sweden, who will of course make any resistance struggle illegal.

Therefore it is impossible to conduct the struggle on the terms of the liquidators – therefore it is impossible even to conduct a discussion on the terms of the liquidators.

It is right to defend Marxism-Leninism Mao Zedong Thought and SKP's second congress' Marxist-Leninist main line, party democracy, and the open struggle of

⁴ Bo Gustafsson and Sture Ring were the leading representatives of a previous rightist line, which was defeated in the second congress, 1976. Sture Ring left the party in 1977 with his closest allies in a failed attempt to create a split.

opinions – it is wrong to allow the new party right to establish a liquidationist platform and to behave as a faction towards the whole party.

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