

PART FIVE

Edward Pickersgill Created an Illusion of Himself as a Leader

ILLUSION OF LEADERSHIP, REALITY OF MISLEADERSHIP

Edward Pickersgill was no revolutionary leader. He was however a skillful misleader. Using his skills of articulation and wielding authoritarian rule inside the Collective, Edward Pickersgill was able to retain the illusion of his leadership abilities for a time. This illusion could not be smashed by individual Collective members surveying their own experiences with this petty despot. These isolated instances of criminal misleadership were not conclusive. The myth of Edward Pickersgill's leadership could only be exposed when the members of the Collective combined their individual experiences into a body of collective knowledge which proved, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that this petty despot was not a revolutionary leader but a counter-revolutionary criminal.

Edward Pickersgill knew that such unified collective strength would be his undoing. For this reason he did everything he could to prevent the development of such a unity amongst the members of the Collective. In the final analysis these attempts were futile. Collective unity developed in spite of Edward Pickersgill's misleadership and it was this unity and strength which enabled the Collective to finally expose the crimes of this petty despot and overthrow his rotten line.

Edward Pickersgill constantly promoted himself as a leader who had faith in the combined strength and political integrity of the Collective members. He proclaimed that the driving force behind him was anti-imperialist revolution. These hollow claims were exposed through his actual practice of misleadership.

Edward Pickersgill viewed the process of developing revolutionary leadership as a power struggle for control of the Collective. He viewed other comrades as "competitors" for his title. Edward Pickersgill's basic view of his own leadership was exposed in a threat he periodically issued. He said that, "anybody who rises to challenge my leadership of the Collective will be in for the fight of their lives." This petty despot would issue the threat with a sneer on his face, with a menacing hiss and with eyes slitted for maximum intimidatory effect. These threatening theatrics were successful to a certain extent in discouraging other comrades from addressing the weaknesses in his leadership for fear of escalating the situation out of all proportion.

No revolutionary leader would issue the threat which Edward Pickersgill made to his comrades. Implicit in the threat were the breast-beating assertion that "you'd better be damn good to beat me because I'm the best", and the lie that "revolutionary leadership develops out of a competition for power between individuals". This is, in its essence, the bourgeois line on political leadership.

VANITY, CONCEIT AND CONTEMPT — ATTRIBUTES OF A BOURGEOIS RULER —

Edward Pickersgill's threat that those who rose to challenge his leadership would be in for the fight of their lives was not an empty one. It was translated into practice whenever a "challenge" arose. Edward Pickersgill saw criticism as a challenge to his personal integrity and as a threat to his position. So he refused to do self-criticism and treated all criticism as a major personal attack. He dealt merciless blows to all who dared to criticize him and so effectively stifled the open voicing of opinions. To criticize Edward Pickersgill's leadership meant preparing for a massive endurance campaign out of all proportion to the importance of the original criticism.

In his report, "The Work Of The April Joint Plenum Of The Central Committee And Central Control Commission", Stalin addressed this question of self-criticism by leading comrades. He

pointed out: "I know that there are people in the ranks of the Party who have no fondness for criticism in general, and for self-criticism in particular. Those people, whom I might call 'skin-deep' Communists, every now and then grumble and shrug their shoulders at self-criticism, as much as to say: Again this accursed self-criticism, again this raking out of our shortcomings — can't we be allowed to live in peace? Obviously, those 'skin-deep' Communists are complete strangers to the spirit of our Party, to the spirit of Bolshevism."

Stalin goes on to address the question of the masses and the leaders in more detail. He notes: "A peculiar sort of relation has lately begun to arise between the leaders and the masses. On the one hand there was formed, there came into being historically, a group of leaders among us whose prestige is rising and rising, and who are becoming almost unapproachable for the masses. On the other hand the working-class masses in the first place, and the mass of the working people in general are rising extremely slowly, are beginning to look up at the leaders from below with blinking eyes, and not infrequently are afraid to criticize them."

Stalin further stresses: "And what good can be expected when the top leaders become self-conceited and begin to look down on the masses? Clearly, nothing can come of this but the ruin of the Party. But what we want is not to ruin the Party, but to move forward and improve our work. And precisely in order that we may move forward and improve the relations between the masses and the leaders, we must keep the valve of self-criticism open all the time, we must make it possible for Soviet people to 'go for' their leaders, to criticize their mistakes, so that the leaders may not grow conceited, and the masses may not get out of touch with the leaders."

Stalin goes on to explain that it is wrong to demand that every criticism made should be correct on all accounts since this will lead to the stifling of criticism and an extremely unhealthy situation. He notes: "If you demand that their criticism should be 100 per cent correct, you will be killing all possibility of criticism from below, all possibility of self-criticism. That is why I think that if criticism is even only 5 or 10 per cent true, such criticism should be welcomed, should be listened to attentively, and the sound core in it taken into account. Otherwise, I repeat, you would be gagging all those hundreds and thousands of people who are devoted to the cause of the Soviets, who are not yet skilled enough in the art of criticism, but through whose lips speaks truth itself."

"Precisely in order to develop self-criticism and not extinguish it, we must listen attentively to all criticism coming from Soviet people, even if sometimes it may not be correct to the full and in all details. Only then can the masses have the assurance that they will not get into 'hot water' if their criticism is not perfect, that they will not be made a 'laughing-stock' if there should be errors in their criticism. Only then can self-criticism acquire a truly mass character and meet with a truly mass response."

Mao Zedong also addresses this question of criticism from the masses and points out that even if Party members are unjustifiably criticized the worst that can happen is demotion or transfer. Neither of these "fates" is anything to fear.

Mao Zedong states in his "Talk At An Enlarged Working Conference Convened By The Central Committee Of The Communist Party Of China": "There should be full democracy both inside and outside the Party, that is, democratic centralism should be practised in earnest in both spheres. Problems should be brought out into the open frankly and the masses allowed to speak out, speak out even if we are going to be abused. The worst that can come out of this abuse is that we will be toppled and thus be unable

to continue in our current jobs — demotion to lower organizations or transfer to other localities. What's so impossible about that? Why should a person go only up and not down? Why should one work only in one place and not be transferred to another? I think that, whether they are justified or not, both demotion and transfer have advantages. They help to temper people's revolutionary will, enable them to investigate and study many new situations, and acquire more useful knowledge."

Mao Zedong urges comrades not to fear criticism but to learn from it. Criticism is the only tool we have for strengthening unity and increasing our fighting capacity. Edward Pickersgill was incapable of viewing criticism in this way because he had an incorrect view of leadership. He equated leadership with individual dictatorship, and criticism with personal attack.

In "Some Questions Concerning Methods Of Leadership", Mao Zedong describes the development of leadership, not as a power struggle between individuals, but as a continuous process of identifying, organizing and uniting those with leadership skills.

Mao wrote: "The leaders must therefore be skilled in uniting the small number of active elements around the leadership and must rely on them to raise the level of the intermediate elements and to win over the backward elements. A leading group that is genuinely united and linked with the masses can gradually be formed only in the process of mass struggle, and not in isolation from it. In the process of a great struggle, the composition of the leading group in most cases should not and cannot remain entirely unchanged throughout the initial, middle and final stages; the activists who come forward in the course of the struggle must constantly be promoted to replace those original members of the leading group who are inferior by comparison or who have degenerated. One fundamental reason why the work in many places and many organizations cannot be pushed ahead is the lack of a leading group which is united, linked with the masses and kept constantly healthy."

Edward Pickersgill stood in opposition to Marxist-Leninist teachings on the question of criticism/self-criticism and on the correct relations between the leadership and the masses. This charlatan rarely did self-criticism. When he did do so, it was no more than superficial window dressing designed to soothe Collective opinion against himself. The best example of this false self-criticism is seen in Edward Pickersgill's grovelling "self-critical" documents written after the discovery of his faction. The "self-criticism" he offered turned out to be merely a stalling tactic designed to disarm the Collective members while he planned his reactionary strategy.

Edward Pickersgill's reluctance to do self-criticism and his refusal to accept criticism from others led to a reluctance among the comrades to criticize this petty despot. As Stalin describes, comrades were afraid of getting into "hot water" or being made a "laughing-stock". Edward Pickersgill actively worked to develop this reluctance into an actual fear. He labelled this phenomenon "fear of the leadership". In actual fact this "fear of the leadership" was fear of Edward Pickersgill and its roots lay in this petty despot's arrogant, self-centred view of himself as the immaculate and ultimate authority, and the translation of this reactionary view into a rotten social practice.

TOP DOG AND BIG FISH

Edward Pickersgill viewed himself as "top dog" in the Alive Production Collective. He saw himself as "the leader", the ultimate authority. Other comrades were viewed by him as minions to be ordered around, abused and insulted. Edward Pickersgill viewed himself as the "centre of the universe" and tried to insist that others treat him as such.

In order to try to preserve his desired position as "top dog" Edward Pickersgill seriously undermined any attempts to develop an effective collective leadership and hampered other leading comrades' struggle to develop as secondary leaders. The establish-

ment of an effective collective leadership structure is impossible when the leading comrade creates an atmosphere of fear of leadership, and in practice enacts his own line that "no matter what others think or decide, I'm number one and I'll make the decisions". The failure of a number of leadership units in the Collective's history is eloquent testimony to Edward Pickersgill's rotten "top dog" mentality.

At the end of the Mini-Cultural Revolution, one such attempt at a collective leadership unit was tried. This unit, which was called the Lu Hsun Unit, held a series of almost daily meetings for a short period of time immediately after its formation in February, 1978. The early meetings and decisions of the Lu Hsun Unit were communicated to the Collective via a series of reports written by Edward Pickersgill. The meetings and decisions reported on in these early documents were real.

However, after just a few weeks of operation, the Lu Hsun Unit began being transformed into a mere illusion. This process began when several members of the unit were absent from meetings for various medical and personal reasons. Edward Pickersgill had found himself outnumbered inside the unit. His ideas were meeting almost constant opposition. With a number of leading members temporarily away, he saw his chance to re-exert himself as "the leader" and took it.

He began by removing one member from the unit by unilateral decision. The comrade was not present for the discussion and given no chance to argue her case. Edward Pickersgill then started issuing documents in the name of the Lu Hsun Unit without prior discussion. Meetings of the Lu Hsun Unit became few and far between. During this period some members of the Lu Hsun Unit saw documents issued in the name of the unit just prior to them going into general circulation. Other members of the unit did not see documents until *after* they were issued!

Although Edward Pickersgill continued to mouth support for collective leadership, in practice he arrogantly trampled all attempts to develop this and promoted himself as "the leader" instead. In time the Lu Hsun Unit became merely a pseudonym for Edward Pickersgill and collective leadership became a mere illusion. With monumental arrogance Edward Pickersgill assumed the name of the Lu Hsun Unit as his own.

Edward Pickersgill's "centre of the universe" mentality was also revealed in his upholding of one set of standards for himself and another set for other comrades. In practice he carried the line that leadership entitled him to special privileges. This petty dictator viewed himself as a special person. His spontaneity, impetuosity and arrogance would never have been tolerated in others. If other comrades had sunk to the level of his degenerate lifestyle they would have been subjected to massive abuse.

Edward Pickersgill often proclaimed, in words, Robin Hood's line that "a leader should not expect his men to do things he is not prepared to do himself". In practice, however, he consistently did things which were viciously opposed any time they appeared in other comrades' practice. It should be pointed out that many of Edward Pickersgill's errors were never committed by other comrades. In reality Edward Pickersgill was a leader more like the Sheriff of Nottingham than Robin Hood.

A definite product of Edward Pickersgill's "top dog" mentality was his view that one person in the Collective should have all the information on the life of the Collective and its members centralized in his head. Needless to say, this "one person" was to be Edward Pickersgill. He did in fact attempt to keep his finger on the pulse of all aspects of the life of the Collective. The impracticality of this was proven by the number of times that he forgot details of the political work. In some cases he apparently forgot how programs came into being, when in fact he had initiated them himself.

Edward Pickersgill's desire to be "top dog" and keep tabs on the whole Collective meant that he was vehemently opposed to any growth in the number of Collective members. He would whine, "Why can't the Collective remain a small organization for a long period of time? What is wrong with that?"

The comrades would patiently explain how the mobilization of a large number of people was necessary to make revolution in Canada. However Edward Pickersgill was not convinced. He was not interested in revolution. He was interested in being a big fish in a small pond. He did not want to be a small fish in a big pond. He knew that more comrades meant that the chance of his exposure would be increased.

Edward Pickersgill was constantly exerting his independence as "the leader". He was the big individualist and he upheld his own personal view on any question as the ultimate authority. In his essay "Rectify The Party's Style Of Work", Mao Zedong wrote: "Those who assert this kind of 'independence' are usually wedded to the doctrine of 'me first' and are generally wrong on the question of the relationship between the individual and the Party. Although in words they profess respect for the Party, in practice they put themselves first and the Party second. What are these people after? They are after fame and position and want to be in the limelight. Whenever they are put in charge of a branch of work, they assert their 'independence'. With this aim, they draw some people in, push others out and resort to boasting, flattery and touting among the comrades, thus importing the vulgar style of the bourgeois political parties into the Communist Party. It is their dishonesty that causes them to come to grief. I believe we should do things honestly, for without an honest attitude it is absolutely impossible to accomplish anything in this world."

Mao Zedong further stressed: "Which are the honest people? Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin are honest, men of science are honest. Which are the dishonest people? Trotsky, Bukharin, Chen Tu-hsiu and Chang Kuo-tao are extremely dishonest; and those who assert 'independence' out of personal or sectional interests are dishonest too. All sly people, all those who do not have a scientific attitude in their work, fancy themselves resourceful and clever, but in fact they are most stupid and will come to no good. Students in our Party School must pay attention to this problem."

ILLUSIONS OF LEADERSHIP PROMOTED

In order to try to cover his tracks, Edward Pickersgill promoted a number of illusions about his leadership abilities. These illusions stood firm for a time but quickly began to crumble as the Collective became more unified.

Until the disclosure of his faction within the Collective in August, 1978 brought the struggle with Edward Pickersgill to a climax, the Collective had been operating under the illusion that the leadership was far stronger and more united than it was in reality. This illusion was deliberately fostered by Edward Pickersgill.

The fact was that a large number of disagreements had taken place between Edward Pickersgill and other leading comrades. The actual content of these disagreements was suppressed as was the fact of their existence, by the petty dictator. As a result, the two lines in these struggles were never clearly identified and were never put to the test of examination by the broad masses of the Collective members. Instead these struggles were frequently allowed to deteriorate into a one-on-one situation.

In this way the opportunity for leading members to develop their revolutionary leadership capacities in the fire of two-line struggle was undermined. Such struggles are the fires in which actual unity is forged and revolutionaries are tempered. Edward Pickersgill could only fear such a process. In the fire of this struggle lay the seeds of Edward Pickersgill's exposure and ultimate destruction.

In order to try to stave off what he saw as "competition" from other leading comrades, Edward Pickersgill would promote various lies about these comrades. He promoted that adventurism and terrorism were negative lines which were concentrated in a few key individuals in the Collective. These individuals were long-standing, advanced comrades, and by using these slanders Edward Pickersgill hoped to impede their development as leaders in the Collective.

In actual fact it was Edward Pickersgill's own practice which was

characterized by spontaneity and impetuosity, characteristics which always lead to adventurism and terrorism. A situation which arose frequently in external organizing illustrates this well.

Often meetings were held with contacts and supporters of Alive's work to build unity in practice by encouraging these people to take up practical tasks of assistance to the Collective's overall work. When preparing for such meetings Edward Pickersgill would frequently state that he was unfamiliar with the particular case and so would ask one of the other leading comrades to take the lead in discussion.

However, at the actual meeting this individualist would ignore the pre-arrangement and start to "mouth-off" before the more knowledgeable comrade even had a chance to set the direction of the discussion.

In these meetings Edward Pickersgill tried hard to be witty and clever. He made himself, not political unity, the issue. On a spontaneous basis he would even launch insulting attacks against the supporters present if one of them dared to disagree with his analysis or even express confusion about what he was saying.

All of these traits left people at these meetings with the view that Edward Pickersgill was an obnoxious breast-beater who was absolutely full of himself. Dislike of this one individual would often be transferred onto the political work of the whole Collective. In such situations Edward Pickersgill's spontaneity created animosity where a principled united activity might have been built instead.

Adventurism did not only manifest itself in Edward Pickersgill's persistence in developing tactics in a spontaneous manner. He also developed strategy with the same kind of spontaneity. At meetings to plan strategy he would pour out a myriad of ideas in a railroading style. Comrades were swamped in all these ideas and as a result Collective policies were set in an anarchic, spontaneous manner with little regard for anything other than the immediate situation at hand. Yet Edward Pickersgill consistently promoted the illusion of himself as a great strategist, a masterful revolutionary theoretician. In fact, he had very little grasp of ideology, and even less grasp of strategy.

Edward Pickersgill worked hard at portraying himself as a fearless warrior of class struggle. He based this myth on his fierceness in struggles against comrades in the Collective. However this anger and ferocity in one-on-one situations, in which he knew he could easily get the upper hand, was not the same as the actual spirit of daring and fearlessness required to wage struggle against real enemies.

In fact, Edward Pickersgill was willing to walk away from the struggle against the Bainzites, one of the most significant struggles that the Collective has ever waged. He later promoted that he had led this struggle. In reality, however, Edward Pickersgill's initial reaction to publicly exposing the Bainzites was one of nervousness and unwillingness to wage such a public campaign against such an "overwhelming" enemy. It took persistent encouragement from other leading comrades to warm him up to the struggle.

In October 1975, Edward Pickersgill split with the Bainzites because he felt personally slighted by them. Previous to this, other members of the Collective had formally expressed their political opposition to the Bainzites by issuing formal written documents.

As soon as the final split took place, the Collective members proposed that a campaign should be waged to publicly expose the Bainzites as counter-revolutionary scum. Edward Pickersgill balked at this proposal and put forward various spurious reasons for not doing so. He claimed that CPC (M-L) was a legitimate Party and "we should not attack the Party", that they would seek revenge through physical attacks, that they had a better grasp of Marxist-Leninist theory than we did, and that Hardial Bains had a strong grasp of ideology. The other comrades knew the Bainzites better than this and persistently presented counter-arguments to each point raised. Finally Edward Pickersgill was forced to agree to a public campaign against the Bainzites.

Edward Pickersgill loudly proclaimed his fearlessness in struggle but when actually faced with a real situation his brave words

turned to vacillation and cowardice.

Mao Zedong addresses such empty bravado in his essay "Beat Back The Attacks Of The Bourgeois Rightists". He states: "Don't we talk about tempering? Tempering means forging and refining. Forging is shaping by hammering and refining is smelting iron in a blast furnace or making steel in an open-hearth furnace. After steel is made, it needs forging, which nowadays is done with a pneumatic hammer. That hammering is terrific! We human beings need tempering too. Some comrades, when asked about being tempered, would appear very much in favour, saying, 'Oh yes, I have shortcomings. I'm eager to get some tempering.' Everybody says he wants it. To talk about it is very easy, but when it comes to the real thing, when it means being 'forged' with a pneumatic hammer, he backs away, scared stiff."

Edward Pickersgill was a political opportunist, always out to save his own neck and preserve his position. During the Mini-Cultural Revolution, some comrades were discussing the fact that revolutionaries need to keep their eyes focused on a fixed point in order to maintain their equilibrium. Comrades used the analogies of keeping balance when walking along a railroad track by looking at a fixed point in the distance, and of early navigators training their sextants on guiding stars in order to establish their direction. One leading comrade pointed out that Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought must be our guiding star. Edward Pickersgill picked up this concept and put forward the slogan, "Anti-imperialist revolution is our north star!"

This discussion took place just before the pregnancy of one of the women in Edward Pickersgill's faction was revealed to the Collective. Edward Pickersgill later admitted to another comrade that he thought the coining of this slogan had been fortunate since it had served to warn the Collective members against pinning their hopes on himself as leader of the Collective, and would focus their attention on the political work instead. Thus, the exposure of his darker side would not cause the comrades to become disillusioned with anti-imperialist revolutionary work.

Of course, this opportunist did not articulate his full meaning. He did not say that if the comrades focused their attention on the political work in the general, abstract way he wanted them to, they would be put off the trail of his promiscuity and further investigation of his corrupt leadership, which would lead to exposure of his factionalism.

In actual fact, the slogan Edward Pickersgill coined was theoretically unsound. The north star is a fixed point by which direction can be established. Anti-imperialist revolution is not a fixed goal. It is a strategy that may change if the principal contradiction in Canada changes. The more correct slogan would

be, "Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought is our north star". This never occurred to Edward Pickersgill because correct leadership of the Collective was not his primary concern. He was more concerned with keeping the members of the Collective at bay and off his trail.

REVOLUTIONARY LEADERSHIP AND PROGRESSIVE POLITICS COMPLETELY ABANDONED

Edward Pickersgill was afraid of class struggle. He was absolutely unwilling to subject his negative practice to scrutiny by Collective members. Edward Pickersgill claimed that he held back in bringing things to the Collective because he thought the comrades were incapable of actually dealing with them. In fact he held back because of his monumental arrogance and personal pride, and because of his contempt for the Collective.

Contempt for the Alive Production Collective was the underlying theme in Edward Pickersgill's documents issued after August 18, 1978. For instance, in his document entitled "Factionalism, Its Roots And Effects In The APC", he wrote: "I must bring my ideas into correspondence with the laws of the objective external world. I do not think, and I say this with all due respect to the 'members of the APC', that this means bringing my ideas into correspondence with the laws of the APC". What kind of "respect" can Edward Pickersgill have for the Collective members when he slanders their ability to establish Collective norms that correspond with the objective conditions of revolution in Canada? What kind of revolutionary leadership is it that cannot in practice have trust and faith in the strength, honesty and political integrity of the ordinary members?

In the recent political struggle Edward Pickersgill did not even act like a political person, never mind the leader of a revolutionary organization. This charlatan always promoted that the driving force behind him was anti-imperialist revolution. Yet in this recent struggle he threw anti-imperialist politics completely out of the window and attempted to reduce the political struggle to the level of a dog fight over material goods and business interests, as witnessed in his document, "Letter Dated September 30th" and his subsequent bourgeois legal manoeuvres.

Edward Pickersgill was no revolutionary leader. Indeed he was no revolutionary at all. He had no faith in his comrades and no faith in the Canadian people. Mao Zedong spoke of these people who lack faith, in his essay "On The Question Of Agricultural Co-operation". He wrote: "We must have faith in the masses and we must have faith in the Party. These are two cardinal principles. If we doubt these principles, we shall accomplish nothing."

PART SIX Edward Pickersgill Was A Misleader

"LEADERSHIP" BY DESPOTISM — EDWARD PICKERSGILL'S AUTOCRATIC STYLE —

In his essay "On Contradiction" Mao Zedong wrote: "Opposition and struggle between ideas of different kinds constantly occur within the Party; this is a reflection within the Party of contradictions between classes and between the new and the old in society. If there were no contradictions in the Party and no ideological struggles to resolve them, the Party's life would come to an end."

This struggle between correct and incorrect ideas is also a constant feature of life within the Alive Production Collective. It is this struggle which gives the Collective its political life and vitality. It is this struggle which enables correct ideas to triumph over incorrect ideas and so move our political work forward.

What must be our method in such struggles against incorrect ideas? Mao Zedong gives concrete guidance on this question in his essay "On The Correct Handling Of Contradictions Among The People" when he says: "What should our policy be towards non-Marxist ideas? As far as unmistakable counter-revolutionaries and saboteurs of the socialist cause are concerned, the matter is easy, we simply deprive them of their freedom of speech. But incorrect ideas among the people are quite a different matter. Will it do to ban such ideas and deny them any opportunity for expression? Certainly not. It is not only futile but very harmful to use summary methods in dealing with ideological questions among the people, with questions concerned with man's mental world. You may ban the expression of wrong ideas, but the ideas will still be there. On the other hand, if correct ideas are pampered in hot-houses without being exposed to the elements or immunized from disease, they will