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Red Pages is a publication of the Maoist Communist Union (MCU), an organization dedicated to advancing the principles of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism in the struggle for revolution in the United States.

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Founding Statement of the MCU

THE MAOIST COMMUNIST UNION is an organization of comrades committed to advancing the principles of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism in the struggle for revolution in the United States. This struggle is part of the larger international communist movement. Our formation has been informed by years of experiences laying the foundation for a revolutionary party in the United States, including the experiences of the Mass Proletariat organization from which a number of our members hail.

One of the key lessons we have learned from our experiences is the importance of grasping the principles of united front work. In pursuing this work, and building relevant organizations in turn, we have sharpened our understanding of the essential role played by communist revolutionaries in mass struggles. These experiences have also shown the need to continuously study the lessons of revolutionary theory and of revolutionary history. Our work building resistance while simultaneously creating a leading core of revolutionaries has not been a smooth process. It has required us to further our understanding of the dialectical relationship between theory and practice, and the relationship between political development and involvement in struggle. In the process we have improved our understanding of various class forces.

The moment of our founding marks a tremendous growth in the objective factors for revolutionary advance internationally and in the United States—where the ruling class is increasingly divided over how to maintain its imperialist rule and dominance. At the same time, the subjective factors for the people's advance in the United States, namely the existence of principled revolutionary organization and cadres, remains at a low level. It is our duty to transform this situation.

As part of our founding we are announcing the launch of our theoretical journal Red Pages. In addition we welcome individuals and organizations—including those from different political backgrounds—from near and afar to engage in theoretical exchange and debate with us.

Dare to Struggle, Dare to Win,

MCU

November 23rd, 2020

In Memory of Jan Myrdal: Revolutionary Activist, Writer, and Reporter (July 1927-October 2020)

JAN MYRDAL HAS DIED following a lifetime of articles, polemics, and historical works which have been of remarkable service towards the revolutionary movement. In particular, Myrdal excoriated the moral claims of apologists for the citadels of capitalist-imperialism. Late in his life, Myrdal was invited to report on the red base areas inside India, a tribute to his lifetime of work which resulted in one of his greatest contributions to the International Communist Movement, his 2010 text *Red Star Over India*. Myrdal's lifetime of revolutionary activism and writing serve as an example that should be emulated by the newer generation of revolutionary activists.

In some ways, Myrdal was exposed to the hypocrisy of the liberal-bourgeois establishment by virtue of his birth. His mother and father were the pinnacle of the Swedish and international liberal intelligentsia. His father, "left"-liberal Gunner Myrdal, "shared" a Nobel prize with neoliberal economist Dr. Friedrich A. von Hayek by virtue of the Nobel Committee's insight that the two perhaps were on the same side after all. Jan's sister became a bourgeois academic "ethicist", and married Derek Bok, the man twice called in as a relief-pitcher by Harvard's corporate board, a person whose bureaucratic dullness was seen as the right antidote to controversies between students, faculty, and university management.

But Jan rebelled against the path of service to the power elite laid out for him, dropping out of high school as a teenager to become a communist. His rebellion did not stop there. Following World War Two, especially following Khrushchev's theory of "peaceful co-existence," the European communist parties generally followed a backward march towards revisionism. A series of policies and stands that capitulated to the dominant establishment followed. The intellectual class—with whom Myrdal was well-acquainted—played a key role on this venture. In turn, Myrdal dissected the representatives and advocates of these trends with an introspective wit.

Myrdal continued to break away from the establishment in the early 60s following his 1962 visit to the countryside in revolutionary China, a visit he documented in his work *Report from a Chinese Village*. His observations of a people in the process of collective struggle

and transformation of society resulted in a personal and political reexamination for Myrdal. The outcome was his denunciation of various forms of European chauvinism and imperialism, and his endorsement of the Maoist revolutionary camp. Myrdal remained committed to this path until his death.

Myrdals' writings tend to be wide-reaching in scope, jumping between places, times, the personal, historical, and even his own dreams, in an effort to weave together a multifaceted analysis of class formations and political tendencies. He often used himself as the object of investigation, subjecting himself to a relatively unfiltered probing of his psychological makeup and shortcomings, including aspects of internalized misogyny. In a situation in which so many of his former comrades had given up the fight, Myrdal's self-criticism and analysis was relevant to many people who were committed to stay on the revolutionary path. This was captured by the title of his acclaimed book *Confessions of a Disloyal European* (1968).

In the experience of many of our comrades who joined the struggle to reestablish a Maoist movement in the United States over the past decade, Myrdal's writings have played an important role in providing education on the frontlines of international revolutionary struggle, in particular through his writing on the Indian revolutionary movement. His books *Red Star Over India* (2010) and *India Waits* (1980) are very important resources for clarifying the nature of contemporary Indian society and the ongoing revolutionary movement there.

It was in part because of the clarity of his analysis of the Indian situation in his 1980 text that three decades later, on the eve of 2010, Jan Myrdal received a phone call while in Sweden. This was an invitation from the central committee of India's Communist Party (Maoist)—a party banned by the Indian state—to travel the forests of the country to learn about the movement and to share the information with the world.

A few weeks later, Myrdal, at 82 years of age, was ushered into the underground in Delhi, and from there taken to the jungle areas in Dandakaranya to see the movement firsthand, and to meet members of the party's leadership. These included (now former) General Sec-

retary Ganapathy and party spokesperson Azad, the latter of whom was assassinated by the state on his way to attend a discussion on the subject of possible peace talks with the government shortly after Myrdal's visit.

Myrdal's resulting book was something of a present-day version of Edgar Snow's text *Red Star Over China*, the book that broke the story to the world about the Chinese revolutionary movement then thriving in the country's hinterland. Myrdal reminds his audience though that his two week visit to the Indian comrades was far shorter than Snow's four month visit to the Yan'an base area. As such he emphasizes the importance of his interviews with Indian party leadership. These remain posted on his book's website at <http://redstaroverindia.se/>

Myrdal at times played the role of a rebel contrarian in Sweden, where he consistently bucked intellectual trends. He sometimes focused on the hypocrisy of his opponents at the expense of addressing their criticisms head on. This tendency was most evident in his statements on the Khmer Rouge. Myrdal was a member of a delegation of the Sweden-Kampuchea Friendship Association that toured Cambodia in 1978 during the reign of the Khmer Rouge. During this trip he interviewed Pol Pot. Later

when other members of the group publicly denounced the regime of Pol Pot, Myrdal declined to do the same. Instead, he argued that if the leadership of the Khmer Rouge were brought to trial it should be on the condition that the US architects of mass-bombing of Cambodia in the years before the Khmer Rouge be tried as well. In other remarks he later said it was undeniable that there were many deaths during the reign of the Khmer Rouge, and possibly as many as those killed during the US bombing campaigns.

One gets the sense that Myrdal may have withheld criticism of the Khmer Rouge because he thought his audience needed first to be confronted with the hypocrisy of promoting foreign intervention in Cambodia as a benevolent force. For Myrdal, this imperialist deceit included both the workings in the region of western international law, which he reminds us was at play during the closed door trial in 1970 that sentenced Prince Norodom Sihanouk to death. Along with Prince Sihanouk other members of the deposed government we also sentenced to death. The trial was part of the western engineered coup against the Cambodian government, which at the time was inclined towards supporting revolutionary developments in Vietnam and China. The same deceit was also



Myrdal with his wife and comrade Gun Kessle in front of the Citroën 2CV that they used for a series of long journeys, including their trip to Afghanistan and then-Soviet Central Asia, recounted in their 1971 book *Gates to Asia*.

shown in the world powers' acquiescence to the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in 1978, an invasion that Myrdal stated created a new norm for disregarding basic respect for territorial sovereignty. He argued that this precedent was useful for the architects of future genocidal wars, including those in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In his book *The Silk Road*, compiled during his travels in 1976, Myrdal asked Chinese Communist Party members in Xinjiang about their criticism of Stalin. These questions were particularly relevant in Xinjiang given that, under Stalin's leadership, the Soviet Union had pursued a foreign policy of aligning with the despotic warlord Sheng Shicai, who inflicted significant losses on the region's revolutionary forces in the 1930s.

The comrades in Xinjiang replied that they have many deep criticisms of Stalin (along with certain praise), but explained that such criticisms were an internal matter, not to be advanced internationally given the damage such open criticism would have presented to the international movement. At the time the leaders of the Soviet Union were using criticism of Stalin to justify their full-scale restoration of capitalism, and were promoting similar revisionist politics internationally. Therefore the CCP pursued a policy of critical support of Stalin, but were not always public with all of their criticisms.

Myrdal at times seems to have been putting forward a similar logic in some of his later intellectual struggles with the conventional wisdom of the Sweden and European liberal elite. But unlike the comrades in Xinjiang, Myrdal seems to have been acting at times as a party of one.

For instance, there has been extensive criticism of the politics of the Khmer Rouge, and not just from the liberal establishment. In 1999, the publication *A World to Win* published an in depth critique of the regime from a Maoist perspective in the article "Condescending Saviours: What Went Wrong with the Pol Pot Regime."

And yet Myrdal seems to have been mostly silent on such analysis and critiques, relegating his commentary for an audience of the liberal intelligentsia for whom he refused to play the part of a prodigal son. In a 2011 article on the subject, Myrdal writes (in very roughly translated Swedish): "Of course I could now write in [the Swedish daily newspaper] *Aftonbladet* that when in 1978 in Kampuchea mass murder was going on around me but that out of gratitude to the hosts who offered food—or out of con-

sideration for my friendship with Pol Pot, I wanted then to say nothing about it. For which I am now ashamed. If I did this with a sufficiently convincing sense of shame, I would soon after death have a beautiful afterward in both *Dagens Nyheter* and *Svenska Dagbladet*—not to mention kind words in Swedish Radio and *Expressen*. But that would be a lie by me. I did not see any mass murder. I have nothing to be ashamed of in what I wrote about what I saw. What we saw really saw, however, does not interest [writer] Peter Fröberg Idling. That side of reality is of no interest to ... Idling or the current Swedish media."

But of course, Myrdal's observations were and are of interest to others beyond the mainstream. (That being said, our understanding of Myrdal's writings is limited by the fact that much of it remains in Swedish, still to be translated, and it is likely we are unaware of a great deal of writing by Myrdal on the subject.) His observations of what he saw, and what he really thought of the Khmer Rouge were and still are of interest to us. And for an experienced activist, writer, and reporter, it seems highly unlikely that he encountered no evidence of mass murder in 1978.

On the other hand, it was precisely through Myrdal's dialectical analysis of liberal and other bourgeois intellectual trends that he was able to make one of his most substantial political contributions, his dismantling of the ideological armor of the oppressor classes.

His work in this respect is vast, including commentaries on Indian, Chinese, and Cambodian history, not to mention published work on the Swedish writer August Strindberg. His work on international subjects was informed by extensive travels abroad, and in depth dialogue with many historical figures, including many notable revolutionaries. Myrdal's positions following the counter-revolutionary coup in China in 1976 were not without significant errors. Such pitfalls were somewhat inevitable though in an international movement that had lost a significant source of clarity and pole of revolutionary orientation. However, after visiting China in the early 1980s, he became clear on the nature of the "Great Reversal" that was then taking place.

This consideration, which also can be seen as one of the questions of "who are our friends" did not escape Myrdal's careful and thoughtful attention either. In many essays he advanced the importance of dialectical analysis of individuals in the movement, including those with



Myrdal meeting with Mao Zedong in 1962.

whom we maintain serious disagreements, but whose arguments and ideas when analyzed according to what is right and wrong, provide essential lessons. Put another way, Myrdal offers us important insight into the principle of unity-struggle-unity over the course of a lifetime of experience in the international movement.

As he stated:

When it comes to our own friends, comrades, and even classics we do not write hagiographies; we see them as Cromwell said when he was to be portrayed: "With warts and all." All of us who on any level have had some years and decades of activism in popular and so-called Left movements have experience of individuals either changing color, becoming renegades, or in fact having been placed among us by the ruling class. (Remember that Mussolini was once a well-known socialist.) But that is not so interesting. Above all there always are discussions. Sometimes they tend to be acute. There have been and are many political conflicts among those that have considered themselves as Marxists. How are they to be seen and handled? The relations between Friedrich Engels and Franz Mehring give an answer ... Engels was able to, on the one hand, point out that he and Mehring had been

"in different camps" in a situation where necessarily "he who is not for us is against us" and, at the same time, note "that we have come to be in the same camp." This an important statement (like when Mao Zedong made the distinction between the different types of contradictions) ... Engels thus viewed Franz Mehring and his work comprehensibly. This is important. I have here referred to both Franz Mehring and David Ryazanov. But they engaged in sharp, very sharp, polemics against each other. It is not only possible but necessary both to evaluate these polemics and see what in them was correct and what not and at the same time regard and use both Mehring and Ryazanov as important Marxist scholars.¹

Myrdal was one of the few (William Hinton also comes to mind) who struggled through the challenges of the "Great Reversal" in China on personal and political fronts to map out a way forward for revolutionary writers and historians.

It is our sincere hope that comrades in the United States and throughout the world read Myrdal's works and follow his example in contributing a lifetime of efforts of struggle, criticism and self-criticism in the service of the international revolutionary movement!

¹ From "What Does it Mean to be a Marxist?" Jan Myrdal, in *Critical Asian Studies*, 45-1 (2013). Available online here: <https://bannedthought.net/Journalists/Myrdal-Jan/Myrdal-WhatDoesItMeanToBeAMarxist.pdf>

The Debate on Gonzaloism in the International Communist Movement: On the Recent Exchange Between the C(M)PA and the CPB(RF)

OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS, a line struggle has developed within the International Communist Movement (ICM) on a number of important questions, including the evaluation of the Peruvian Communist Party (PCP) and Gonzalo Thought, the question of Chinese imperialism, and an analysis of the international situation. These topics were highlighted in the Communist (Maoist) Party of Afghanistan's (C(M)PA) criticism of a 2018 May Day Statement published by a number of parties and organizations in Latin America and Europe.¹ In prior years the C(M)PA had cosigned similar May Day statements. However, as they outlined in their criticism "A Glimpse at the Joint International Statement of the Eight Latin American Parties and Organizations,"² their disagreements with the line of the other groups made it impossible for them to cosign the 2018 May Day Statement (hereafter referred to as "the May Day Statement"). The C(M)PA criticized the signatories' analysis of the international situation (especially their understanding of Chinese imperialism), their support of "Gonzalo Thought," and their tendency to discount the importance of Maoists spreading revolutionary theory among the masses, as well as other related dogmatic and revisionist ideas. In criticizing the May Day Statement, the C(M)PA raised a series of important questions that all Maoist forces around the world should grapple with. In doing so, they also contributed to the development of an important line struggle within the ICM. Despite this progress, there has been little follow through in recent years, something we have unfortunately contributed to by delaying publication of a response. In the context of the present COVID-19 epidemic, rising inter-imperialist conflict, and the new upsurge in people's struggles, we share the following response in the hope that it can contribute to further discussion and debate.

In late April of 2019, one Party among the signatories of the 2018 May Day Statement, the Communist Party of Brazil (Red Fraction) (CPB(RF)), published a response to the C(M)PA's criticism.³ However, in their response, the CPB(RF) did not engage with the criticism in

a principled and comradely manner. Instead, they ignored many of the key points raised by the C(M)PA, and when they did respond to other points, they did so by distorting the criticisms made by the C(M)PA. Such sloppiness was presumably of little concern to the CPB(RF) given their main point—the claim that Gonzalo Thought is the equivalent of Maoism—and their assertion that the C(M)PA's comradely criticisms of the PCP and Gonzalo Thought were essentially the same as the imperialist and reactionary attacks on the PCP and Gonzalo.

To avoid responding to important criticisms, and to distort and misrepresent other criticisms is not a revolutionary approach to political struggle. It is important for communists to respond to criticisms in a clear and direct manner, especially when they pertain to important topics such as analyzing the international situation and evaluating the successes and failures of past revolutionary movements. In this regard, the CPB(RF)'s response was particularly troubling. In equating the C(M)PA's criticism of Gonzalo Thought with reactionary and imperialist attacks on the PCP, they effectively argue that criticizing Gonzalo Thought and the PCP is inherently reactionary. This runs counter to the basic Maoist principle that every political party and individual has correct and incorrect ideas, and as such every political organization has successes and failures. Through comradely criticism and self-criticism, as well as discussion, debate, and dialectical materialist analysis it is possible to sum up success and failures, avoid repeating mistakes, and turn failure into the mother of success. Instead of adopting the Maoist method of concrete investigations of concrete situations, and the dialectical materialist worldview—which teaches us that all efforts are a mix of success and failure—the CPB(RF) has adopted a dogmatic politics, in short, a form of revisionism typical of the contemporary groups and parties who uphold Gonzalo Thought today.

In this document, we analyze the C(M)PA's criticism of the May Day Statement as well as the CPB(RF)'s

1 <https://www.newepoch.media/post/2018/05/02/-proletarians-of-all-countries-unite>

2 http://www.sholajawid.org/english/main_english/A%20Glimpse%20at%20the%20Joint%20International%20Statement.pdf

3 The original Portuguese version of the document can be found here: <https://dazibaorojo08.blogspot.com/2019/04/movimento-comunista-internacional.html>. A provisional English translation can be found here: <http://www.demvolkedieneen.org/index.php/en/t-dokumente-en/3200-on-the-criticism-of-the-communist-party-maoist-afghanistan-to-the-joint-declaration-of-may-1-2018>

response to this criticism. We also weigh in on the ongoing line struggle within the ICM. We agree with the C(M)PA's view that Gonzalo Thought is a deviation from a revolutionary Maoist line. Many of the groups which uphold Gonzalo Thought today are fundamentally revisionist.⁴ The struggle against these revisionist groups is a component of the larger struggle between proletarian and the bourgeois lines within the ICM. This is all the more important because these groups have advanced the thesis that Gonzalo Thought is the highest stage of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and called for an international conference to unify Maoist parties and organizations around their revisionist line. Given the class contradictions within capitalist-imperialism, it is inevitable that these struggles will emerge; they are the reflections of the class struggle within the revolutionary camp itself. Therefore, we call upon all Maoist parties and organizations to join in the struggle against these Gonzaloist groups who are waving the red flag to oppose the red flag.

The Initial May Day Statement & the C(M)PA's Reply

In order to fully clarify the stakes of the disagreements and the nature of the struggle in question it is necessary to first provide an overview of the criticisms raised by the C(M)PA. This overview will also help to clarify the liberal and revisionist essence of the CPB(RF)'s response to the criticisms. There are three basic and related points for which the C(M)PA criticized the May Day Statement: its analysis of objective and subjective conditions for revolution globally, the analysis of the world situation, and the promotion of "Gonzalo Thought." On these three points, we agree with the C(M)PA's criticism. Our view is that the statement's signatories have incorrect views on these important issues. For these lines and tendencies to be defeated, an open struggle must be waged against them.

One of the C(M)PA's main criticisms of the May Day Statement concerned the analysis of the objective and subjective conditions in the world today. The Statement claimed that:

"In 200 years since the birth of our founder and 170 years since the Manifesto, the world has never been in such turmoil and the objective conditions been so ripe for the World Proletarian Revolution, given the level of the socialization of production and the most advanced degree of decomposition of capital – agonizing imperialism – never seen before."⁵

The C(M)PA criticized this analysis on a number of fronts. They acknowledge that production is now more socialized than any time in human history and that this objective condition is favorable for revolution. However, they also point out that "the subjective condition for world proletarian revolution is not only backwards but extremely so."⁶ They go on to explain that one cannot look solely at the objective conditions globally, but that it is also necessary to analyze how organized and prepared the various Maoist parties and organizations are around the world. This is because Maoism teaches us that favorable objective conditions alone are not sufficient to bring about a revolution. The masses of people must also be striving for revolution, and the vanguard party of the proletariat must be organized and experienced, it must have a correct political line, and it must have deep links with the masses.

The C(M)PA also notes that among the signatories of the document, none are even presently fighting a Protracted People's War in their respective countries.⁷ They state:

"Even the Communist Party of Brazil (Red Fraction) which is the largest force among the signatories of the statement in question, is at the stage of preparation for initiating the people's war and is distant from arming the working class with the proletarian revolutionary ideology (MLM) even at the level required to initiate people's war in Brazil."⁸

We are generally in agreement with the C(M)PA's analysis and criticism of the Statement on these points. However, in our view, the C(M)PA's analysis—that the objective conditions for revolution are favorable but the subjective conditions are not—is somewhat insufficient. It

4 It is important to distinguish between the PCP itself—which despite its defeat, was a dominantly revolutionary organization—and Gonzaloist groups today who are often little more than small groups of adventurists and dogmatists.

5 <https://www.newepoch.media/single-post/2018/05/02/%E2%80%9CProletarians-of-all-countries-unite%E2%80%9D>

6 http://www.sholajawid.org/english/main_english/A%20Glimpse%20at%20the%20Joint%20International%20Statement.pdf (page 1)

7 Later in the document we will discuss further our disagreement with the C(M)PA's analysis that PPW is a universal strategy for revolution. However, the basic point they make—that most Maoist parties around the world are still in the early stages of development—is accurate.

8 http://www.sholajawid.org/english/main_english/A%20Glimpse%20at%20the%20Joint%20International%20Statement.pdf (page 3)

is true that there are certain favorable objective conditions at present (and all the more so, two years after their statement, given the current global pandemic and economic depression), and it is true that production is more highly socialized than at any other point in human history. However, this is only one objective condition among a myriad of others which together determine how favorable the objective conditions are for revolution. For example, the contradictions between imperialist powers, the contradictions between imperialist powers and the compradors in oppressed nations, the global level of debt, the degree of overproduction, and the relative degree of boom or crisis in the global economy are a number of objective factors which are all important parts of the picture.

There are favorable objective conditions globally and especially within certain countries. These include Mexico, which has faced a deep economic crisis and near-civil war between the government and lumpen-bourgeois narco-traffickers, and Lebanon which has been locked in a years long economic and political crisis with no end in sight. However, the overall global situation has at times been much more favorable for revolutionary advances in the past. Therefore, it is also important to distinguish in a more concrete fashion between the objective conditions internationally and the objective conditions in a given country. Despite these shortcomings with the C(M)PA's response, they overall have an objective view on the present feasibility of revolution.

The May Day Statement, in contrast, makes sweeping non-objective generalizations on the potential for revolution and present state of the world. For example, the Statement concludes that “the world has never been in

such turmoil” as at present. While since the advent of the COVID crisis a few months ago more people are making such statements, we should also keep in mind that in the last century alone there were two world wars. Surely the signatories of the May Day Statement cannot expect us to believe that the present inter-imperialist competition is worse than during WWI and WWII? The current crisis may eventually produce another world war or similar levels of global upheaval. But this is not the objective situation at present.

The authors of the May Day Statement go on to claim:

On the base of the increasingly deeper economic crisis of the world imperialist system, from which the crisis of bureaucratic capitalism in the oppressed countries is part of, the whole political system of the old order enters an advanced degree of decomposition. The political crisis expresses higher and growing contend [sic] between the factions of the ruling classes, showing that the old reactionary States have already reached an advanced stage of decomposition and sinking. A revolutionary situation develops unevenly and persistently in it.⁹

The C(M)PA also put forward a sharp criticism of this analysis. They note that a revolutionary crisis comes into being only when “the authority of the old reactionary ruling classes is in crisis and the masses of the people are no more willing to accept that authority. In other words, a revolutionary situation comes into being when the subjective and objective conditions of revolution have materialised.”¹⁰ This criticism is based on Lenin's analysis of revolutionary situations,¹¹ and shows how one-sidedly and

9 <https://www.newepoch.media/post/2018/05/02/-proletarians-of-all-countries-unite>

10 http://www.sholajawid.org/english/main_english/A%20Glimpse%20at%20the%20Joint%20International%20Statement.pdf (page 7)

11 Given that there is sometimes confusion among the opportunists and dogmatists in the ICM on even such basic concepts as a revolutionary situation, we thought it pertinent to quote Lenin on the subject:

“To the Marxist it is indisputable that a revolution is impossible without a revolutionary situation; furthermore, it is not every revolutionary situation that leads to revolution. What, generally speaking, are the symptoms of a revolutionary situation? We shall certainly not be mistaken if we indicate the following three major symptoms: (1) when it is impossible for the ruling classes to maintain their rule without any change; when there is a crisis, in one form or another, among the “upper classes”; a crisis in the policy of the ruling class, leading to a fissure through which the discontent and indignation of the oppressed classes burst forth. For a revolution to take place, it is usually insufficient for “the lower classes not to want” to live in the old way; it is also necessary that “the upper classes should be unable” to live in the old way; (2) when the suffering and want of the oppressed classes have grown more acute than usual; (3) when, as a consequence of the above causes, there is a considerable increase in the activity of the masses, who uncomplainingly allow themselves to be robbed in “peace time”, but, in turbulent times, are drawn both by all the circumstances of the crisis and by the “upper classes” themselves into independent historical action.

“Without these objective changes, which are independent of the will, not only of individual groups and parties but even of individual classes, a revolution, as a general rule, is impossible. The totality of all these objective changes is called a revolutionary situation. Such a situation existed in 1905 in Russia, and in all revolutionary periods in the West; it also existed in Germany in the sixties of the last century,

mechanically the authors of the Statement understand the development of revolutionary politics. They take two factors—highly socialized production and “the most advanced degree of decomposition of capital”¹²—and conclude from this that the world is in turmoil and chaos and that things have never been so ripe for revolution.¹³ Not only is this analysis incredibly simplistic and reductionist, as the C(M)PA points out the May Day Statement also entirely ignores the role of the subjective factors in the development of a revolutionary situation.

What’s more, revolutionary situations do not always lead to revolutions. Therefore, it is important to distinguish between different types of subjective factors. For example, Lenin notes that in revolutionary situations lower classes must “not to want to live in the old way” and “there is a considerable increase in the activity of the masses.” These are two fundamental aspects of revolutionary situations, but in order to transform a revolutionary situation into a socialist or new democratic revolution (depending on the concrete situation) there also needs to be another factor, namely, a Maoist Party. So, while revolutionary situations occur because of a confluence of objective and subjective factors, they are only transformed into successful proletarian revolution by the activity of an MLM party with a correct line and deep links to the broad masses of people. Such a party must also develop a strong united front and a people’s army—either through splitting the reactionary army in a capitalist country or through developing one through protracted people’s war

in a colonial or semi-colonial country.

These are basic and fundamental lessons of Maoism that the signatories of the May Day Statement have neglected to consider here. The Statement’s failure to even mention the subjective factors for revolution suggests its authors lack clarity on these crucial topics. The C(M)PA points out that this lack of clarity leads the authors to neglect the essential task of spreading the lessons of MLM among the working class. For example, the Statement claims:

And even though the proletariat has suffered heavily with the capitalist restorations, where it had conquered Power and was constructing socialism, the revolutionary proletariat has proven and developed its scientific ideology marxism, leninism and maoism as its new, third and superior stage, equipping the class more than ever with its almighty weapon to mobilize, politicize and organize the oppressed masses of the world to struggle, defeat and sweep away imperialism, its lackeys and all reaction from the face of earth, part by part, combating revisionism and all opportunism in an implacable way and inseparable from this struggle.¹⁴

It is a great achievement that revolutionaries around the world have synthesized Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and summed up many of the lessons of the socialist revolutions of the 20th century and their eventual reversals. However, summarizing these lessons is not the

and in Russia in 1859-61 and 1879-80, although no revolution occurred in these instances. Why was that? It was because it is not every revolutionary situation that gives rise to a revolution; revolution arises only out of a situation in which the above-mentioned objective changes are accompanied by a subjective change, namely, the ability of the revolutionary class to take revolutionary mass action strong enough to break (or dislocate) the old government, which never, not even in a period of crisis, “falls,” if it is not toppled over.”

Lenin, “The Collapse of the Second International,” written in June 1915, *Lenin Collected Works*, Vol. 21, pp. 213-14. Available online at: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1915/csi/ii.htm#v21pp74h-212>

12 Given that the statement was published a few months after U.S. stock markets had reached then all-time highs—which have since been surpassed—it seems strange that the authors of the Statement believed that capitalism was in an “advanced” stage of decomposition. Major corporations were raking in record profits and the imperialist countries faced only relatively minor mass rebellion. However, confusing at it may seem, they apparently were referring not to any particular economic or political crisis when speaking of the “decomposition” of capital, but rather the development of capitalist imperialism itself (which they refer to as “agonizing imperialism”). By this argument, capitalism has faced an “advanced degree of decomposition” since at least the start of the 20th century!

An MLM analysis of capitalist-imperialism exposes this argument for the absurdity that it is. The imperialist stage of development of capitalism represents an immense degree of concentration of capital and power in the hands of a tiny number of trusts. Therefore, imperialism does not represent an “advanced degree of decomposition of capital” but rather an incredible *composition and concentration* of capital previously unseen in all of human history! This concentration of capital prepares the ground for socialist revolutions and the eventual destruction of capitalism and the value form, but preparing the grounds for something and the thing itself occurring are not the same thing, no more than tilling a field and reaping a crop are the same thing!

13 Again, it is important to emphasize that the recent developments of COVID-19 pandemic, mass rebellions, and the beginnings of a major economic depression have changed the situation somewhat. Still, this pales in comparison to the instability seen during the two world wars of the 20th century.

14 <https://www.newepoch.media/post/2018/05/02/-proletarians-of-all-countries-unite>

same as equipping the working class with MLM ideology. The reality is that globally the working class is generally very unfamiliar with MLM at present. As the authors' confusion indicates, many nominally Maoist parties and organizations remain confused about basic aspects of Maoism.

It is subjective on the part of the authors to conflate the synthesis of MLM ideology with "equipping the [working] class more than ever with its almighty weapon." It is also strange and concerning that the authors refer to MLM as "almighty." Maoism is a powerful political ideology with which the working class and the broad masses can overthrow their oppressors and continue down the road to communism after the revolution. However, to refer to ideology as "almighty" or omnipotent reflects an overall tone here of replacing content with bravado.

These metaphysical descriptions of MLM as "almighty" also seem linked to neglecting the need of spreading MLM among the people. The authors in fact imply that the development of ideology will automatically lead to its spread among the people by conflating the development of the ideology with its popularization among the working class and other popular classes. The authors' inability to distinguish between these two separate but related processes leads them to effectively negate the need to spread proletarian ideology and Maoism among the masses. As the C(M)PA points out, "arming the working class with MLM is a task that remains and needs to be deepened and expanded in the entire [sic] different phases of the struggle." They go on to elaborate on how there is a need to further equip the working class with Maoism all the way up to communism.

Lenin pointed out that, "It would be...rail-ism to think that the entire class, or almost the entire class, can ever rise, under capitalism, to the level of consciousness and activity of its vanguard, of its Social-Democratic [Communist] Party."¹⁵ In short, the arming of the entire working class with Maoism is not something that can be completed prior to a revolution. Under capitalism the bourgeoisie dominates the working class economically, politically, and ideologically. One result of this domination is that, even in a revolutionary situation, it is unrealistic to expect the majority of the masses to be Maoists. The majority may well support a revolution and the line of the Communist Party leading that revolution, but supporting

a revolution and grasping the lessons of Maoism are not one and the same thing. Only after the systematic inequalities inherited from the old society are broken down and eliminated will it be possible for the masses of people as a whole to fully grasp the lessons of Maoism.

The C(M)PA also points out that given the low level of organization among the signatories of the May Day Statement, and most Maoist organizations around the world, the task of arming the working class with MLM is far from complete, even for the purpose of preparing for a revolution. Given this situation, the C(M)PA asks:

"How can one declare that the task of arming the working class with MLM as a task that has ended? This kind of understanding would lead to nothing but negligence in the task to increasingly connect MLM with the struggles of the workers and the masses around the world."¹⁶

This is a particularly important criticism of the Statement. The C(M)PA correctly highlights how the mechanical analysis of the Statement will inevitably lead its authors to neglect the essential task of connecting Maoism with the struggles of the working class and broad masses. To abdicate this fundamental task of all Maoist parties and organizations is to abandon Maoism and adopt revisionism. It is to privilege the theoretical development of MLM at the expense of its practical application—which in turn inevitably leads to theoretical degeneration of the sort evident in the May Day Statement.

The Statement's tendency to emphasize the "objective ripeness" of the international situation without discussing the subjective weaknesses of the ICM and the movement in many countries is an effective negation of the need to raise the class consciousness of the masses. This deviation often leads to tailing spontaneous mass movements—a tendency that Lenin criticized long ago in *What is to Be Done?*—and also functions as a justification for not going further and deeper among the masses. The authors' related overemphasis on the objective conditions—and their tendency to exaggerate how ripe conditions are for revolution—are indicative of a tendency towards "left" adventurism and extreme subjectivism. It is important to struggle against these and other revisionist trends within the ICM so that a revolutionary proletarian

15 Lenin, "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back," *Lenin Collected Works (LCW)*, Vol. 7, p. 258.

16 http://www.sholajawid.org/english/main_english/A%20Glimpse%20at%20the%20Joint%20International%20Statement.pdf (page 3)

line can prevail. While the dominant deviation in popular movements remains that of right-opportunism, the rise of various forms of dogmatism has also impaired the ICM in the period from Deng's coup to the present.

The non-proletarian trends and alien class tendencies not only distort the authors' views of the development of the International Communist Movement and the essential tasks of Maoists, these trends also lead the authors to a series of revisionist and subjective conclusions about the present international situation:

*“Yankee imperialism (“The fat dog”) as the sole hegemonic superpower is the principal enemy of the peoples of the world, is the one who heads, in contention and collusion with the Russian atomic superpower (“the skinny dog”) and other imperialist powers, the wars of aggression and plunder against the oppressed peoples and nations of the world.”*¹⁷

The authors of the May Day Statement argue that the two main imperialist powers are the U.S. and Russia, and that of these the U.S. is “the principal enemy of the peoples of the world.” It is true that the U.S. is the strongest imperialist power in the world at present; however, being the strongest imperialist power in the world is not the same as being the principal enemy of *all* the peoples of the world. A basic dialectical analysis shows this to be the case. The U.S. monopoly capitalist class is certainly the principal enemy of the people of the U.S. and of people faced with U.S. occupation and invasion. However, for the French people, their principal enemy is not the U.S. but actually the monopoly capitalist class of France, which is itself an imperialist country. The U.S. is also not the principal enemy of the people in countries which are primarily dominated by imperialist powers other than the U.S., such as France's neocolonial empire in Africa or Eastern European countries like Belarus which are strongly dominated by Russia.

Therefore we agree with the C(M)PA's criticism that the U.S. is “not the principal enemy of the *all* the peoples of the world, because it is in a situation of aggressive war against the *majority* of the oppressed peoples and nations of the world and not in a position of aggressive war against *all* of them.”¹⁸ This is a basic point essential

to an MLM understanding of imperialism. Just because one imperialist power is stronger than the others does not mean that it is the principal enemy of *all the peoples of the world*. It seems that the authors of the May Day Statement based their understanding of the world situation on an analysis of relative strength of competing powers without a Marxist appreciation of the division of the world between competing imperialist spheres of influence and domination, and the common struggle of the people against imperialism in its manifold forms.

An essential aspect of any Maoist analysis is identifying the principal contradiction in a given situation at a given moment. For example, in *On Contradiction*, Mao notes:

*“When imperialism launches a war of aggression against such a [semi colonial] country, all its various classes, except for some traitors, can temporarily unite in a national war against imperialism. At such a time, the contradiction between imperialism and the country concerned becomes the principal contradiction, while all the contradictions among the various classes within the country (including what was the principal contradiction, between the feudal system and the great masses of the people) are temporarily relegated to a secondary and subordinate position. So it was in China in the Opium War of 1840, the Sino-Japanese War of 1894 and the Yi Ho Tuan War of 1900, and so it is now in the present Sino-Japanese War.”*¹⁹

Mao's analysis is instructive. He notes that when under direct imperialist occupation or invasion, the principal contradiction in a semi-colonial country becomes the contradiction between the invading empire and the oppressed nation. In this situation, the imperialist aggressors are the principal enemy of the people of the oppressed nation. However, in the normal functioning of a semi-colonial country, the principal contradiction is generally between feudalism and the broad masses of people. This was the case in China between the Yi Ho Tuan War of 1900 and the start of the Japanese invasion. During this period, alongside the imperialist powers who were carving up the country, the domestic feudals, various warlords, and the comprador bureaucratic bourgeoisie took on the

17 <https://www.newepoch.media/post/2018/05/02/-proletarians-of-all-countries-unite>

18 http://www.sholajawid.org/english/main_english/A%20Glimpse%20at%20the%20Joint%20International%20Statement.pdf (page 5)

19 From *On Contradiction*, quoted from the section titled “The Principal Contradiction and the Principal Aspect of a Contradiction.” Online here: https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1_17.htm

mantle of principal enemies of the people.

This does not mean that China was not oppressed by the imperialists when it was not facing a direct invasion. In fact, even when not under imperialist occupation, and when not being invaded by imperialist powers, the contradiction between the imperialist powers and the Chinese people was still a fundamental contradiction in Chinese society at the time. Therefore, organizing resistance against the imperialist powers was necessary even when the principal enemy of the Chinese people was the feudals and the comprador bureaucratic bourgeoisie.²⁰

In line with this Maoist approach, in their 2004 document *Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution*, the CPI (Maoist) stated:

*“In the present stage, where no imperialist power is resorting to direct aggression on our country or when our country has not been reduced to the status of neo-colony of any single imperialist power, it is the contradiction between feudalism and broad masses of the people at present that is the principal contradiction. Agrarian revolutionary programme and area-wise seizure of power remain primary during the entire period. But if the principal contradiction changes to that between imperialism and the Indian people, accordingly a specific programme to unite all the anti-imperialist forces will have to be drawn up as part of the general programme of the New Democratic Revolution.”*²¹

This dialectical materialist analysis stands in sharp contrast to the reductionist approach of the authors of the May Day Statement. Here we have a nuanced understanding based on a concrete analysis of the situation in India as well as a clear outline of how this situation could change in the future and what tactics would be appropriate should such a change occur. This sort of dialectical materialist analysis is fundamental to Maoist politics, and almost totally absent from the May Day Statement.

The C(M)PA critiques the authors of the Statement along similar lines when they note, “the principal

enemy of the people of Brazil and similarly the principal enemy of the people of India is the reactionary feudal-comprador ruling classes in those countries and the contradiction with imperialism, particularly the contradiction with Yankee imperialism, does not constitute the current principal contradiction in those countries.”²² They also note that:

*“Yankee imperialism is not at the helm of all wars of aggression against the oppressed peoples and nations of the world. For example, the foreign imperialist military bases present in Tajikistan are not Yankee because they belong to Russian imperialism. These forces have a presence in Tajikistan with the agreement of the government of Tajikistan but are in a situation of aggression against the people and nation of Tajikistan. Yankee imperialism is not at the helm of the imperialist war imposed on the peoples of Syria to the extent that it is related to the aggressive occupying Russian military bases in Syria; it even could be said that recently the Russian imperialist aggression compared with the American imperialist aggression has been heavier. Similarly, there are many aggressive occupying European imperialist forces in countries in the African continent. Russian imperialism (“the skinny dog”) is the principal enemy of the oppressed peoples and nations that belonged to the sphere of Soviet social-imperialism which are under actual Russian forces occupation.”*²³

This analysis amounts to an MLM understanding of capitalist-imperialism, namely that the world is divided between competing imperialist countries and blocs. These powers struggle with each other to re-divide the world in their interests and launch wars of aggression against upstart compradors and to subjugate oppressed populations who rebel against domestic reactionaries and/or imperialist domination. However, this system of capitalist-imperialism is not stable. As competition between imperialist powers increases—often in relation to economic downturns—the principal contradiction globally will transform from the contradiction between imperialist powers (plu-

20 Just because a contradiction is not the principal contradiction at a given moment does not mean that it is unimportant or that it will not become the principal contradiction in the next moment. In a complex situation, such as the situation in any country, there are a whole series of contradictions which interrelate in a complex fashion and mutually influence and determine each other's development. Therefore, it is crucial to apply the principle of “concrete investigations of concrete situations” to gain a dialectical materialist understanding of how various contradictions interrelate.

21 <http://www.bannedthought.net/India/CPI-Maoist-Docs/Founding/StrategyTactics-pamphlet.pdf>

22 http://www.sholajawid.org/english/main_english/A%20Glimpse%20at%20the%20Joint%20International%20Statement.pdf (page 6)

23 Ibid.

ral!) and oppressed nations to the contradiction between imperialist powers.

The growing competition between imperialist powers is evident in the proxy wars in Syria and Ukraine, as well as rising tensions in the South China Sea and the U.S.-China trade war. The May Day Statement's total lack of analysis of these conflicts—and the related buildup to World War III—represent a lack of theoretical clarity on the fundamental dynamics of capitalist-imperialism. What's more, it seems that the authors are ignorant of some of the most important developments in the world today, such as the rise of China as an imperialist power and the fact that it is now the principal strategic rival of U.S. imperialism. The C(M)PA offers a sharp criticism of these shortcomings in the Statement:

The statement is silent about the role of Chinese social-imperialism, the “fat dog” number two which is becoming a global superpower. This “fat dog”, and the biggest atomic power of the world after Russia, has recently invaded a big region in the South China Sea and occupied all its islands. In fact, the statement still considers Chinese social-imperialism as part of the “third world.”

Anyhow, according to the statement, Yankee imperialism is the first world and the principal enemy of the people of the world; Russian imperialism along with other imperialist powers is part of the second world, and the rest of the countries, including China, are considered part of the third world. This understanding has been described in detail in a document of the Communist Party of Brazil-Red Fraction, published earlier.²⁴

The growing strength of Chinese imperialism—politically, economically, and militarily—should be clear to anyone who follows international developments. Even to those lacking a Maoist perspective, it is generally clear that China poses a greater long-term challenge to the U.S.

24 Ibid.

25 What's more, given its overall weakness, the Russian monopoly capitalist class has signed a series of somewhat unfavorable deals with China.

26 <https://www.scmp.com/news/world/united-states-canada/article/2180451/china-china-china-new-pentagon-chief-patrick>

27 Ibid.

28 For example, see:

<https://www.cnn.com/2018/11/20/us-firms-arent-ready-to-leave-china-despite-trade-war-analysts-say.html>

<https://www.news18.com/news/tech/hp-dell-microsoft-and-amazon-considering-to-move-production-out-of-china-2216619.html>

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Economy/Trade-war/Apple-tests-AirPods-production-in-Vietnam-as-it-cuts-China-reliance>

<https://e.vnexpress.net/news/business/companies/us-footwear-maker-to-move-china-production-to-vietnam-this-year-3918368.html>

29 For example, see this 2017 Rand Corporation policy paper *U.S. Military Capabilities and Forces for a Dangerous World: Rethinking the*

imperialists and their allies than Russia. The latter is facing a declining population, an economy heavily dependent on fossil fuel exports, and a serious recession in part resulting from U.S. sanctions. This does not mean that Russia is powerless, but overall it does not pose the same strategic threat to the U.S. as China does.²⁵

China has developed a strategy—the Belt and Road Initiative—for challenging U.S. dominance in a whole series of markets, and has been making large inroads into markets and territories which have historically been controlled by the U.S. monopoly capitalist class and its allies. What's more there is growing concern among the U.S. ruling elite and military about the rise of China. For example, the Obama administration carried out the “Pivot to the Pacific” to redeploy U.S. troops and resources to the Pacific region to counter the rise of China. More recently, former Acting Secretary of Defense, Patrick Shanahan, opened his term by saying that the U.S. military had to focus on “China, China, China.”²⁶ This is part of a policy outlined by the U.S. military that views China as “a strategic competitor” that “will continue to pursue a military modernization program that seeks Indo-Pacific regional hegemony in the near term and displacement of the United States to achieve global preeminence in the future.”²⁷

Under the Trump administration, the U.S. has launched a large-scale trade war with China aimed at weakening the Chinese economy, hamstringing their ability to export capital, and pushing U.S. and other countries to move their production from China—something which is now happening *en masse*.²⁸ What's more, the U.S. military is increasingly concerned about China's military buildup—China has the second largest military budget in the world—and there is a general consensus within the U.S. establishment that the U.S. must increase its military budget by *tens of billions of dollars a year* in order to compete with Russia and China.²⁹ These are a few basic aspects of the competition between the U.S. and China

which show that Chinese Social-Imperialism poses a significant strategic threat to the U.S. monopoly capitalist class.

It is also worth noting that the analysis in the May Day Statement stands in contradiction to the views of the two largest and most organized Maoist parties in the world—the Communist Party of India (Maoist)³⁰ and the Communist Party of the Philippines³¹—both of which characterize China as an imperialist power. Given this situation it is quite striking that the authors of the Statement have remained totally silent on this reality, and instead concluded that Russia alone is the major strategic rival of the U.S. While a May Day statement is not the place to provide a comprehensive analysis of the world situation, the Statement does put forward a basic overview of the world situation, and yet has not a word to say about Chinese imperialism or the role that it plays globally.

This approach is quite disturbing, especially giv-

U.S. Approach to Force Planning, which advocated increasing the military budget by “\$20 billion to \$40 billion per year on a sustained basis” in order to “[modernize] the capabilities and posture of U.S. forces in order to better enable them to deter and defeat aggression by China, Russia, and North Korea.” https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1782-1.html

It is worth noting that the Pentagon budget increased by \$61 billion in 2018, and it seems likely that the actual annual budget increases going forward will be closer to this number than the \$20 to \$40 billion per year recommended by the Rand corporation.

30 For example see the following statement: “Revolutionary greetings to the Fiftieth Anniversary of our Party! Strengthen the Party theoretically, politically and organizationally so as to spread and intensify countrywide Protracted People’s War! Celebrate the 50th Anniversary of our Party and the 15th Anniversary of our new Party – CPI(Maoist) from September 21st to November 8th all over the country with revolutionary enthusiasm and revolutionary firm will! A call to the Indian revolutionary ranks and people! Central Committee Communist Party of India (Maoist)”. In it they write:

“The dog-fight between the imperialists for the re-division of the world market and to loot the natural resources is intensifying in the trade and military sectors. The Brexit developments reflect the intensity of the contradictions between the imperialists. The protectionist policies that the US brought forth in the economic sphere in the place of globalization policies are being severely opposed by the other imperialist countries. Trade war between the US and China is going on in an utmost severe manner. West Asia and Indo-Pacific areas are the centre of contradictions between the imperialists. With the vain attempts of the US to sustain world hegemony by facing Iran in West Asia, North Korea in East Asia and the Russian and Chinese imperialists that support these countries are increasing tensions. It especially targeted Iran that is following independent policies without surrendering to the US and imposed several economic sanctions on it. The outbreak of the people against the ‘extradition bill’ in Hong Kong brought by the Chinese government violating the aspirations of the people in away reflects the contradictions between the imperialists. On the whole the three fundamental contradictions of the world are intensifying.”

<https://bannedthought.net/India/CPI-Maoist-Docs/Statements-2019/190724-CC-MsgOn50thAnniversaryOfParty-Eng.pdf>

31 From the Communist Party of the Philippines’ 2019 document “Commemorate the 70th year of the 1949 victory of the Chinese revolution”:

“Today, China is one of the leading imperialist powers in the world. It is engaged in export of capital in the form of onerous loans and capital investments. It is engaged in accumulating new spheres of investment and influence and claiming territories for itself. It has built military bases in Africa and in the South China Sea. It is accelerating its production of new aircraft carriers and modern weaponry in preparation for new inter-imperialist wars to redivide the world among themselves as they face extended global capitalist depression. China is now under the sway of the monopoly capitalists who seek to erase the memories of socialist revolution. In the face of the CPC’s attempt to revise history and distort Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, the CPP considers it a crucial task for the revolutionary proletariat across the world to study the victories of the Chinese people in their national democratic and socialist revolutions, draw lessons and apply these in waging revolutionary struggles in the era of resurgence of socialist revolution. Long live the 1949 victory of the Chinese people’s revolution! Raise high the banner of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism! Wage national democratic and socialist revolution across the world!”

<https://bannedthought.net/Philippines/PPP/2019/Commemorate70thAnniversaryOfChineseRevolution-191001.pdf>

32 For more information c.f. https://oec.world/en/visualize/tree_map/hs92/export/bra/show/all/2017/ and https://oec.world/en/visualize/tree_map/hs92/import/bra/show/all/2017/

33 See data from this ruling class website: https://www.thedialogue.org/map_list/

influence has led to sharp inter-imperialist struggles in several Latin American countries. The U.S. bourgeoisie is extremely worried about Chinese investment, loans, and influence outpacing its own centuries-long stranglehold on the region. But the May Day statement makes no mention of this competition, nor does it even mention the rising power of imperialist China.

The C(M)PA also claims that a prior CPB(RF) document argued that China is part of the “third world.” Unfortunately, the C(M)PA does not provide a citation to the document in question. However, if this is true—and the role of Chinese Social-Imperialism was omitted from the May Day Statement because one or more of the authors view China as an oppressed nation and not an imperialist power—then it would be indicative of an extremely dogmatic tendency within the CPB(RF) and the authors of the Statement. In their recent document CPB(RF) did not respond to these criticisms at all (but more on that later).

The reality is that at present, the imperialist world system is beginning to fracture. There is growing mass rebellion around the world, especially in the oppressed nations and neocolonies, and the competing imperialist powers are trying to reinforce or re-divide existing power-blocs and alliances on the international stage as they begin to build up for World War III. At present, these divisions between the imperialist powers mainly manifest as economic and political conflict, for example in the U.S.-China trade war. However, this competition itself will lead to sharper conflict and eventually larger proxy wars and even world war. The U.S.’s status as the world’s sole superpower—which began after the collapse of the imperialist Soviet Union in 1991—is now at an end. The U.S. ruling class is growing more desperate and fiercer in its competition with rival imperialists, especially Russia and China.

In contrast to this understanding, the May Day Statement puts forward a mechanical analysis of the international situation. The authors disregard the need to understand the relations between situations in individual countries and principal enemies in particular contexts, with the overall world situation and the interests of the proletariat as a whole. They also fail to grasp the dialectical

relationship between revolution in each country and the world revolution. These types of views can only lead to mistakes—such as seeing a situation as more favorable when it is less, seeing secondary issues as primary or vice versa, or mistaking enemies for friends—and unless they are overcome, these mistaken views will inevitably allow opportunism and revisionism to prevail within revolutionary organizations.

The revisionist and opportunist lines in the May Day Statement did not appear out of thin air. Bourgeois class rule, capitalist social relations, and imperialist culture impact the people of the world, including the working class, peasantry, and oppressed nations. Such ideas also exert influence in Maoist parties. This why in their 2009 *Leadership Training Manual*, the Communist Party of India (Maoist) wrote:

We say that we are communists, but are born and brought up with the values of the prevailing ruling classes. When we join the Party those ideas do not disappear by themselves. Besides, we live in society which such feudal and bourgeois values are rampant and quite naturally impact us. In such a situation, there is a need for consistent struggle to change ourselves. Some of our incorrect values are deep-rooted in our subconscious and built around a number of insecurities. [...] Though we may suppress them under some conditions, they assert themselves in other conditions more aggressively.³⁴

It is inevitable that there will be some alien-class tendencies and bourgeois values that arise within Maoist parties. Therefore, the struggle against these tendencies and values is an essential aspect of the two-line struggle and a fundamental task of all Maoist organizations and parties. If these tasks are ignored or carried out half-heartedly, this will allow dogmatism and revisionism to fester and grow.³⁵

The CPB(RF)’s arguments are marked by this sort of dogmatism. At its core, this approach is related to that of parties that have gone the way of right opportunism, such as the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), which in turn had called the essential verdicts of MLM a form of dogmatism. In an open letter to CPN (Maoist), CPI

34 South Western Regional Bureau of the CPI (Maoist), *Leadership Training Programme* (2009), p. 21. This document is cited in Jan Myrdal’s *Red Star Over India* on pages 114-116.

35 See “Evaluating the Cultural Revolution in China and its Legacy for the Future By the MLM Revolutionary Study Group in the U.S. (-March 2007)” <https://www.mlmsr.org/attachments/article/72/CRpaper-Final.pdf>

(Maoist) criticized these issues and wrote about related opportunist and revisionist tendencies in the ICM:

“Fight against dogmatism” has become a fashionable phrase among many Maoist revolutionaries. They talk of discarding “outdated” principles of Lenin and Mao and to develop MLM in the “new conditions” that are said to have emerged in the world of the 21st century. Some of them describe their endeavour to “enrich and develop” MLM as a new path or thought, and though this is initially described as something confined to revolution in their concerned country, it inexorably assumes a “universal character” or “universal significance” in no time. And in this exercise individual leaders are glorified and even deified to the extent that they appear infallible. Such glorification does not help in collective functioning of Party committees and the Party as a whole and questions on line are hardly ever raised as they stem from an infallible individual leader. In such a situation it is extremely difficult on the part of the CC, not to speak of the cadres, to fight against a serious deviation in the ideological-political line, or in the basic strategy and tactics even when it is quite clear that it goes against the interests of revolution.³⁶

In short CPI (Maoist) noted how the deviations in Nepal that ultimately led to capitulation and liquidation of the revolution, were part of a broader trend in the ICM. This trend tends to discount key lessons of MLM as “outdated,” is overly hasty in declaring that a new “path” or “thought” has emerged, and tends to glorify and heap excessive praise on individual leaders, something Mao objected to in his struggle with Lin Biao (who promoted dogmatic praise of Mao to serve his own revisionist aims).³⁷ This approach makes it very difficult to struggle against errors and deviations made by leadership, and promotes a non-proletarian view of the role that individuals play in the revolutionary movement. It ultimately leads to dogmatism, revisionism, and the betrayal of the revolu-

tion.

While CPI (Maoist)’s criticism in their open letter primarily focused on the issues in the Maoist movement in Nepal, they were also concerned with similar trends that exist within the ICM. The mechanical analysis and deviations present in the May Day Statement are related to these negative trends. In particular, many of the authors of the Statement are open proponents of Gonzalo Thought, and some even go so far as to claim that Gonzalo is the “Fourth Sword” after Marx, Lenin, and Mao. In short, they argue that the approach taken during people’s war in Peru has a universal character. This idea is particularly concerning because they do not engage in a materialist analysis of the successes and failures of the PCP, and seems to indicate they are neglecting a materialist approach in the development of their political line. As a result, they are quick to discard key lessons of MLM, such as the need for socialism in one country, and instead argue that Gonzalo’s theories, like *jefatura*, the militarized party, and “global people’s war” are correct and universal, despite never having been proven in practice, and despite the fact that these theories contradict the lessons of the Chinese and Russian revolutions.

For these and other reasons, the C(M)PA decided to openly criticize the Statement and its authors for their adherence to Gonzalo Thought. They noted that “it is necessary that—alongside the principled theoretical, ideological and political struggles based on MLM against Avakian’s New Synthesis and Prachanda Path revisionisms—a struggle should also be waged against the deviation that has emerged as Gonzalo Thought.”³⁸

In the C(M)PA’s analysis Gonzalo Thought is a “third deviation” alongside Avakianism and “Prachanda Path” which “bears the historical responsibility” for the collapse of the Revolutionary International Movement (RIM)—a now-defunct international organization of Maoist parties. They also noted that while the other two

36 <http://bannedthought.net/India/CPI-Maoist-Docs/Nepal/OpenLetterToCPNM-090720.pdf>

37 From “Evaluating the Cultural Revolution...”: “However, this display of party unity obscured the development of deep political differences between Mao and Lin over a number of questions. Mao was especially concerned about the growing number of PLA commanders in the top levels of the party, and by Lin’s promotion of a personality cult around Mao that was actually meant to promote Lin himself as another political genius .. As far back as 1966, Lin claimed that “Chairman Mao’s sayings, works and revolutionary practice have shown that he is a great proletarian genius.... Every sentence of Chairman Mao’s works is a truth, one sentence of his surpasses ten thousand of ours.” In a private letter to Jiang Qing, Mao responded, “I would never have thought that the few books I have written could have such magical powers.” (Jaap van Ginneken, *The Rise and Fall of Lin Piao*, 1977, pp. 61-63). Lin once said, “We must firmly implement the Chairman’s instructions, whether we understand them or not.” (MacFarquhar and Schoenthals, p. 98). For a description of Zhang Chunqiao’s opposition to Lin’s attempt, at a 1970 Central Committee plenum, to insert a reference to Mao’s genius in the party constitution, see *ibid.*, pp. 328-332.

38 http://www.sholajawid.org/english/main_english/A%20Glimpse%20at%20the%20Joint%20International%20Statement.pdf (page 2)

deviations have largely been discredited among Maoist parties, Gonzalo Thought continues “to play a negative historical role” today.³⁹

This negative historical role includes promoting ideas such as the “absolute leadership of the Party over the United Front,” “Jefatura,” and the “militarization of the Party.” The May Day Statement upholds all of these deviations. For example, the authors argue that “The communists of Turkey are struggling to unite the Turkish and Kurdish peoples in the Revolutionary United Front led absolutely by the Communist Party.” They also celebrate “the noticeable advances in the reconstitution or constitution of militarized Maoist communist parties” across Latin America.⁴⁰ It is debatable whether or not the latter is actually occurring, but it is significant that the authors of the Statement uphold the idea that Maoist parties should be militarized. Likewise, it is very concerning that they believe in the “absolute leadership” of the Party over the united front. The C(M)PA sharply criticized the authors for these deviations. Their criticism is worth quoting at length:

Absolute leadership of the communist party over the revolutionary united front is unachievable, because all social classes join the revolutionary united front for securing their class interests and will never let go of their class interests. Thus, there is always a struggle over the leadership among different political and class forces within the revolutionary united front and the communist party, from the beginning until the end, should strive to ensure, develop, and expand proletarian leadership.

Even absolute proletarian leadership over the communist party cannot always exist, because this leadership is condemned/forced to constantly engage in two-line struggle to strive for retaining and strengthening proletarian leadership over the party against deviationist lines within the party. Indeed, since there cannot be a monolithic party, a monolithic revolutionary united front will definitely not exist.

There are two problems with the theoretical formulation of the “unified/centralized leadership of the party, army and revolutionary united front” in the theories

of the Communist Party of Peru, as part of Gonzalo Thought:

Firstly, this formulation considers the method of the leadership over the people’s army applicable to leadership over the revolutionary united front and over the party. In reality, ensuring proletarian ideological and political leadership over the party, ensuring the political leadership of the party over the revolutionary united front, and ensuring the political-military leadership of the party over the people’s army are essentially different from each other. We cannot call the essence and form of the three levels of leadership in parity and at the same level.

Secondly, this formulation is related to the theory of Jefatura in the Communist Party of Peru.⁴¹

This dialectical analysis stands in sharp contrast to the mechanical and reductionist views of the authors of the May Day Statement. Instead of dogmatic assertions of the absolute correctness of the Party and its leaders, the C(M)PA stress the importance of the two-line struggle in the Party. Instead of advocating a military approach to leadership of the Party and united front, they distinguish between the different types of leadership needed for different types of organizations. Instead of upholding a unidirectional relationship between the Party and the united front—where the former commands the latter—the C(M)PA highlights the importance of political struggle between different class forces in the revolutionary united front and the Party. They correctly note that only through such struggle can proletarian leadership develop and expand.

This is in line with the CPI (Maoist)’s view that “The united front[...]is also a struggle front” encompassing a variety of class forces. As their erstwhile General Secretary Comrade Ganapathy stated, “if this dialectical relationship between the united front and the political and ideological struggle can be handled carefully, we will succeed in forming a strong united front and isolate the main enemy.”⁴²

The all-country united front is a broad organization of all classes which have an interest in the revolution. In semi-feudal countries this includes the rich, middle,

39 Ibid.

40 <https://www.newepoch.media/post/2018/05/02/-proletarians-of-all-countries-unite>

41 http://www.sholajawid.org/english/main_english/A%20Glimpse%20at%20the%20Joint%20International%20Statement.pdf (page 10)

42 <http://redstaroverindia.se/pdf/1-In%20Conversation%20with%20Ganapathy.pdf> (page 8)

and poor peasantry, the working class, the petty-bourgeoisie, and the national bourgeoisie. In the country-wide united front, it is impossible for a Communist Party to exercise absolute leadership. Nor is it possible to organize a united front with military discipline. Instead, the Party must struggle with a variety of class forces to promote proletarian leadership within the united front.

This is why, in describing the united front, Lenin wrote that “Only those who are not sure of themselves can fear to enter into temporary alliances even with unreliable people; not a single political party could exist without such alliances.”⁴³ In this case, Lenin was referring to the alliance of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party made with the Russian so-called “Legal Marxists,” who were really bourgeois democrats that used Marxist terminology. This particular united front effort helped to popularize Marxist literature in Russia and was crucial to exposing the Narodniks—a petty-bourgeois “left”-adventurist tendency in Russia. This was important as it helped to clarify the significance and importance of Marxism to the masses of people, and the role that Marxism could play in guiding the Russian revolutionary movement.

During this temporary alliance, the Party did not occupy a position of absolute leadership. Therefore, as the situation shifted, the Tsarist censor began to ban Marxist literature, and the “Legal Marxists” adopted a more conciliatory approach to the Tsar. This temporary alliance was dissolved. Based on Lenin’s analysis of the situation in Russia, he and others were aware that a temporary alliance with bourgeois democrats was possible and advantageous for the Party’s work at that time. However, had they tried to impose the Party’s absolute leadership over the “Legal Marxists” such an alliance would not have been possible in the first place! This united front was a struggle front in which the Party had to fight to ensure that revolutionary politics stayed in command, and when that was no longer the case, they broke off their alliance with the “Legal Marxists.”

Another historical example of importance is the Second United Front between the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese Nationalists.⁴⁴ This united front was only possible in the first place because Mao and the

CCP were able to split the Nationalist camp, including through convincing Nationalist General Zhang Xueliang to help them kidnap Chiang Kai-shek during the Xi’an Incident in December 1936. Even after this, the CCP made a whole series of concessions to preserve the United Front, including renaming the Red Army and nominally subordinating themselves to the leadership of the Guomindang. Even these measures did not prevent the Nationalist troops from attacking the CCP at Chiang’s directive during the 1941 New Fourth Army Incident. Despite this attack and other aggression from the Nationalists, the CCP was able to preserve the united front and avoid fighting both the Nationalists and the Japanese at the same time. This would have been impossible if they had held illusions about the need for the Party to exercise “absolute leadership” over the united front.

However, the authors of the May Day Statement—and the adherents of Gonzalo Thought more broadly—struggle to grasp this essential lesson. Instead, based on a reductive understandings of leadership—in particular an exaggeration of the role of individual leaders—they promote the revisionist notion that from the supposed absolute correctness of the individual leader follows the absolute leadership of the Party over the united front. This ultimately leads to the Party abandoning the need to concentrate and synthesize the correct ideas of the masses.

This view, known in the PCP as *jefatura*, is analogous to the idealist and counter-revolutionary “genius theory” promoted by the renegade Lin Biao during the Cultural Revolution. Lin Biao infamously promoted the theory that only “geniuses” can lead revolutions and stated: “One word from Chairman Mao is worth ten thousand from others. His every statement is truth. We must carry out those that we understand as well as those we don’t.” This idealist approach also resonated with the Chinese feudal values of Confucianism which promoted slavish obedience to authority on the grounds that the common people could not grasp the problems that they faced.

Speaking of Lin Biao’s anti-party clique, Mao said:

In my view, behind their surprise attack and their underground activity lay purpose, organization and a

43 <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1901/witbd/i.htm>

44 See *History of the Modern Chinese Revolution (1919-1956)*, by Ho Kan-chih, chapter on “The Chinese Communist Party’s Policy of Forcing Chiang Kai-shek to Resist Japan. The Sian [Xi’an] Incident-Turning Point of the Situation. The Beginnings of an Anti-Japanese United Front. Struggle of the Northeast Anti-Japanese Allied Army” pp. 145-150. <https://bannedthought.net/China/Pre1949/General/AHistoryOfTheModernChineseRevolution-1919-1956-HoKan-chih-1977-OCR.pdf>

programme. Their programme was to appoint a state chairman [MCU: namely Lin Biao], and to extol 'genius': in other words, to oppose the line of the Ninth Congress and to defeat the three-point agenda of the Second Plenum of the Ninth Central Committee. A certain person was anxious to become state chairman, to split the Party and to seize power. The question of genius is a theoretical question. Their theory was idealist apriorism. Someone has said that to oppose genius is to oppose me. But I am no genius. [...] I wrote 'Some Opinions', which specially criticizes the genius theory, only after looking up some people to talk with them, and after some investigations and research. It is not that I do not want to talk about genius. To be a genius is to be a bit more intelligent. But genius does not depend on one person or a few people. It depends on a party, the party which is the vanguard of the proletariat. Genius is dependent on the mass line, on collective wisdom.⁴⁵

In this passage Mao puts forward a succinct criticism of the "genius theory" and the related excessive praise of an individual. He sums up how these ideas were related to the counter-revolutionary coup plot of Lin Biao and his supporters. These ideas were instrumental in their efforts to disarm the masses and hoodwink them into supporting a coup. In contrast to these idealist notions Mao emphasized collective wisdom, the mass line, and the party which is the vanguard of the proletariat. This approach was essential to the political victories of Chinese Revolution and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. This approach is known as democratic centralism and is a key aspect of Maoist politics. In contrast to the metaphysical theory of genius, which upholds the idea of a single individual as the repository of correct ideas, Maoist politics is based on the collective wisdom of the Party and the masses. For this reason, a big part of the Cultural Revolution in general, and the Criticize Lin Biao, Criticize Confucius

campaign in particular, was aimed at combating passive subservience to authority and the related excessive praise of individuals.

Democratic centralism is not based on a militarized discipline of the masses. It is instead built upon broad democratic base and comradely relations internal to the party and between the party and the masses where the masses of people are free to criticize the Party's shortcomings, including the shortcomings of leaders even at the highest level.⁴⁶ This is because the Party, even when playing the leading role in revolutionary struggles, and even when dominantly pursuing a proletarian line can and inevitably does make mistakes. Understanding and rectifying these mistakes is an essential way in which the Party keeps proletarian politics in command, and mass criticism of the Party's shortcomings is a keyway by which the Party comes to understand and rectify its mistakes. If this approach is not taken mistakes compound and secondary issues that are not rectified can eventually become primary and lead to big setbacks in the revolution.

While different approaches to leadership are necessary for the Party, the army, and the united front, even in the army absolute leadership does not prevail. For example, during the Chinese Revolution the CCP and People's Liberation Army were very conscious of this, and understood how mistakes made by soldiers could often result from the shortcomings of leadership. In September of 1936 the CCP was preparing the grounds for a country-wide united front against Japan through working to win over Nationalist General Zhang Xueliang and the troops under his command. Despite some successes, there was still significant confusion on the policy among the rank and file of the Red Army. Instead of disciplining these soldiers for not following orders, the leadership of the Party and the Army sought to rectify their own shortcomings as leaders and do a better job explaining the United Front Policy to the troops. In *Red Star Over Chi-*

45 From "Talks With Responsible Comrades At Various Places During Provincial Tour," from the Selected Works of Mao Zedong. Online here: https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-9/mswv9_88.htm

46 [http://bannedthought.net/MLM-Theory/MLM-Intro/MLM-BasicCourse-CPI\(Maoist\)-2016-OCR.pdf](http://bannedthought.net/MLM-Theory/MLM-Intro/MLM-BasicCourse-CPI(Maoist)-2016-OCR.pdf) *Marxism-Leninism-Maoism Basic Course*, by the Communist Party of India (Maoist): "Mao's understanding of democratic centralism is clearly 'first democracy, then centralism'. He explained this in many ways— 'if there is no democracy there won't be any centralism', 'centralism is centralism built on the foundation of democracy. Proletarian centralism with a broad democratic base'. This view of Mao was based on his understanding that centralism meant first of all the centralisation of correct ideas. For this to take it was necessary for all comrades to express their views and opinions and not keep it bottled up inside them. This would only be possible if there was the fullest possible democracy where comrades would feel free to state what they want to say and even vent their anger. Therefore, without democracy it would be impossible to sum up experience correctly. Without democracy, without ideas coming from the masses, it is impossible to formulate good lines, principles, policies or methods. However, with proletarian democracy it was possible to achieve unity of understanding, of policy, plan, command and action on the basis of concentrating of correct ideas. This is unity through centralism."

na, Edgar Snow shares a speech that General Peng Dehuai gave to commanders in the First Army Corps:

We must intensify our educational work among our own troops. In several recent instances our men have violated the united-front policy by firing on troops that we had agreed to permit to withdraw. In other instances men were reluctant to return captured rifles and had to be ordered several times to do so. This is not a breach of discipline, but a lack of confidence in their commanders' orders, showing that the men do not fully understand the reasons for such actions, some men actually accusing their leaders of 'counterrevolutionary orders.' One company commander received a letter from a White commander and did not even read it, but tore it up, saying, 'They are all the same, these Whites.' This shows that we must more deeply instruct the rank and file; our first lectures have not made their position clear to them. We must ask for their criticism and make such modifications in our policy as they think necessary after thorough discussion and explanation. We must impress upon them that the united-front policy is no trick to fool the Whites, but that it is a basic policy and in line with the decisions of our Party.⁴⁷

This approach stands in sharp contrast to proclamations about the “absolute leadership” of the Party over everything. Instead, the CCP understood very well that the rank-and-file soldiers had many correct ideas. Drawing on their experiences and soliciting their criticisms, including criticism of the leadership of the Red Army, was an integral part of the success of the Chinese Revolution.

In contrast to the Maoist approach, the authors of the May Day Statement uphold a bourgeois and individualist conception of leadership. This is best exemplified by the CPB(RF)'s document *Lenin and the Militarized Communist Party*, in which they argue that one of the “central ideological-political issues of the world revolution today” is the “constitution or reconstitution of militarized Maoist parties” based on the “universal validity of the Gonzalo Thought.”⁴⁸ This idea of party-building centers around a “great leader” and is based on the PCP's erroneous and non-Marxist conclusion.

In contrast to the Marxist emphasis on dialectical

relationship between individual and collective leadership in the Party, the PCP and the contemporary adherents of Gonzalo Thought emphasize the need for a “great leader” who is the individual repository of correct ideas. This is a bourgeois tendency which glorifies individual leaders, exaggerates the role that they play, excessively praises them, and promotes the idea of infallibility. These are all negative tendencies which contradict the fundamental Maoist approach of collective leadership.

However, the CPB(RF) does not see the contradiction. Instead, they follow the PCP's line that *jefatura* is a necessary and inevitable part of building a Maoist party. What the CPB(RF) does not understand is that *jefatura* is not an inevitable and necessary result of the relationship between the Party and the masses. It is only the natural consequence of a Maoist Party or organization failing to struggle against bourgeois individualist notions of leadership. Abandoning the two-line struggle, adopting a commandist relationship to the masses, and promoting metaphysical ideas about the absolute correctness of leadership can hardly be said to be an inevitable part of the process of development of a Maoist Party. The reality is that the CPB(RF) and the other authors of the May Day Statement have not come to terms with the fact that *jefatura* played a significant role in the setbacks that the PCP faced in 1992. Without grappling this and other mistakes made by the PCP, the authors of the Statement are bound to repeat these same mistakes.

In order to understand the difference between democratic centralism and *jefatura*, it is helpful to quote from Mao at length:

Without democracy there can't be correct centralism because centralism can't be established when people have divergent views and don't have unity of understanding. What is meant by centralism? First, there must be concentration of correct ideas. Unity of understanding, of policy, plan, command and action is attained on the basis of concentrating correct ideas. This is unity through centralism. But if all those concerned are still not clear about the problems, if their opinions are still unexpressed or their anger is still not vented, how can you achieve this unity through centralism? Without democracy, it is impossible to sum up experience correctly. Without democracy, without ideas com-

⁴⁷ Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China*, p. 696.

⁴⁸ <https://serviraopovo.wordpress.com/2018/11/28/lenin-e-o-partido-comunista-militarizado-partido-comunista-do-brasil-fracao-vermelha/> Translation our own.

ing from the masses, it is impossible to formulate good lines, principles, policies or methods.

Our centralism is centralism built on the foundation of democracy. Proletarian centralism is centralism with a broad democratic base. The Party committees at all levels are the organs which exercise centralised leadership. But leadership by the Party committee means collective leadership, not arbitrary decision by the first secretary alone. Within Party committees, democratic centralism alone should be practised. The relationship between the first secretary and the other secretaries and committee members is one of the minority being subordinate to the majority. Take the Standing committee or the Political Bureau of the Central Committee by way of example. It often happens that when I say something, regardless of whether it is correct or incorrect, if the others don't agree, I must accede to their opinion because they are the majority.⁴⁹

Here we have, in Mao's own words, a clear explanation of democratic centralism. This approach—and not *jefatura*—is essential to Maoism. Instead of a top-down approach based on the supposed infallibility of a correct leader, Mao emphasizes the need for broad democratic input from the masses. He goes so far as to say that without this, it is “impossible to formulate good lines, principles, policies or methods.” It is this broad democratic input which serves as the foundation of democratic centralism within the Party.

Later in the same speech he emphasized that without democratic centralism “the dictatorship of the proletariat will be transformed into a bourgeois dictatorship, into a reactionary fascist type of dictatorship,” such as occurred in Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. This is because revolution and socialism are not just about having a correct leadership, but about the dialectical relationship between leadership and the led. The Party leads the masses by concentrating the correct ideas that they have through the mass line method of leadership. It is necessary not only for the masses to follow the Party's leadership, but also to criticize the shortcomings of individual leaders and even the Party as a whole.

The authors of the May Day Statement should

pay close attention to Mao's remarks in the above quotes. He *does not* state that others must follow what he says because he is the great leader of the Chinese Revolution. Instead, he emphasizes the need to uphold the principles of democratic centralism, even when he is in the minority. This is because “leadership by the Party committee means collective leadership, not arbitrary decision by the first secretary alone.”

In the same speech he also warned about issues that had arisen in certain provincial, district, and county Party committees where “in all matters whatever the first secretary says goes.” Mao's view was that, “This is quite wrong. It is nonsense if whatever one person says goes.” He termed this approach “one-man tyranny,” and it is precisely this sort of “one-man tyranny” which the authors of the May Day Statement uphold in the name of Maoism.

Given all of this, we were quite glad to see the C(M)PA's criticism of the May Day Statement. They put forward a principled criticism of Gonzalo Thought and related deviations present in the groups which authored the Statement. This sort of analysis is part of the necessary struggle against rightist and ultra-“left” deviations in the ICM. In order to advance the cause of proletarian revolution, a serious and prolonged struggle must be waged to expose opportunist and revisionist trends, including those who would “wave the red flag to oppose the red flag.” While we do have some disagreements with the C(M)PA's statement, in our view these disagreements are secondary and our agreements are primary.

The CPB(RF)'s response to the C(M)PA

Nearly a year after the C(M)PA published their criticism of the May Day Statement, the CPB(RF) published a public response to the criticism.⁵⁰ However, the response was lacking in a number of respects. First and foremost was the fact the CPB(RF) failed to respond to the majority of the disagreements that the C(M)PA raised. This reflects an aversion to struggle, and the consolidation to dogmatism. Second, when and where they did respond, they often distorted and mischaracterized the C(M)PA's criticism. For example, they repeatedly equate the C(M)PA's criticisms of Gonzaloism with reactionary attacks against the PCP and Communist forces more broadly. At one point they even go so far as to state that the Af-

49 Mao, “Talk at an Enlarged Working Conference Convened by the CC of the CPC”, *Selected Works*, Vol. VIII, pp. 317-22. , available online at: https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-8/mswv8_62.htm

50 <https://www.demvolkedieneen.org/index.php/en/t-dokumente-en/3215-cpb-rf-combat-liquidationism-and-unite-the-icm-under-maoism>

ghan's criticism "makes common cause with the reaction" and equate it with "the furious attacks that imperialism, the bourgeoisie, landlords, revisionists and all the most reactionary systematically dispenses against the PCP, Chairman Gonzalo and his thought and the People's War in Peru." They then go on to assert, "The Communist (Maoist) Party of Afghanistan, in launching its attacks against Chairman Gonzalo, invariably points against Maoism and launches itself into the mire of revisionism undermining the unity base of the International Communist Movement."

While we have some disagreements with the C(M)PA's document and analysis, it is clear that their criticism of the May Day Statement is made in the spirit of proletarian internationalism and comradely struggle. The same cannot be said for the CPB(RF)'s response.

For example, the C(M)PA made a clear and direct criticism of the May Day Statement's analysis of the world situation in general, and the authors' silence on the question of Chinese imperialism in particular. The CPB(RF) offers no response to these criticisms. They also fail to respond to criticisms of the idea of the absolute leadership of the Party over the united front, as well as criticisms of the view that MLM spread among the working class "more than ever." In fact, the CPB(RF) remains silent on almost every major criticism of the May Day Statement.

Instead their response is almost a single-minded attack on criticism of Gonzalo. Not so much on the particularities of criticisms put forward by C(M)PA, but rather an attack on the very idea of criticizing Gonzalo as such. In the view of our contemporary dogmatists, criticism of Gonzalo is antithetical to MLM. Just as, in other documents, they have argued that criticism of the supposed universality of protracted people's war is "to discard the proletarian revolution."⁵¹ The CPB(RF) is, in this way, part of a larger trend of dogmatism in the ICM which blindly and uncritically upholds all that Gonzalo said, including key ideas and theories that contradict MLM, from the idea of the militarized party⁵² to the idea of "people's war until communism."⁵³

This dogmatism is prominently displayed in the Brazilian comrades' response when they make statements

like "no party can advance in the central and main task of reconstituting or constituting the party to initiate the People's War, without understanding and assuming the contributions of universal validity of Gonzalo thought." Have these comrades forgotten about the ongoing people's wars in India and the Philippines? Or did they choose to ignore them? Have they forgotten the fact that neither of the Maoist parties leading these struggles is taking the path of Gonzalo Thought? How is it that these parties are carrying out protracted people's wars without the supposedly universal need for a militarized party and *jefatura*? There can only be two conclusions. Either the CPP and Communist Party of India (Maoist) are not really leading people's wars, or the supposedly universal need to adhere to Gonzalo Thought is not so universal after all.

There is no need to downplay the significance of the Peruvian Revolution, and of Gonzalo's leadership. The PCP made tremendous advances in the revolutionary struggle and played an important role internationally with their contributions to RIM. However, the people's war was defeated (although it can rise again), the PCP smashed, and Gonzalo imprisoned. This was a major setback to the revolution in Peru and to the International Communist Movement. There is a need to understand the reasons for this setback, including through analyzing the shortcomings in the PCP and Gonzalo Thought. Without doing so, the actual causes of the setbacks in Peru will remain shrouded in mystery. Concerningly, some who uphold Gonzaloism continue to deny that these setbacks have even occurred.

The danger with the dogmatic Gonzaloist trend in the ICM is that its adherents vehemently oppose a real Maoist analysis of the successes and failures in Peru. In fact, they go one step further and elevate some of the mistakes made by the PCP into supposedly universal principles. The C(M)PA put it well when they stated that, "the incorrect formulations of the PCP are not based on old/past formulations of the International Communist Movement in opposition to real and new developments in the ICM, but they are formulations based on "new" and incorrect ideas that have been presented in opposition to principled and correct ideas present in the ICM."

and-the-people-s-war-about-the-c-m-pa-critique-of-the-joint-declaration-of-1-may-2018

51 <https://www.demvolkedienen.org/index.php/en/t-dokumente-en/3591-to-discard-people-s-war-is-to-discard-the-proletarian-revolution>

52 <https://www.demvolkedienen.org/index.php/en/t-dokumente-en/3298-el-maoista-lenin-and-the-militarized-communist-party>

53 <https://www.demvolkedienen.org/index.php/en/t-dokumente-en/4008-proletarians-of-all-countries-unite-the-people-s-war-is-the-path-that-we-will-continue-until-communism>

Making their stand on this basis, our contemporary dogmatists even assert that those who disagree with these Gonzaloist “principles” are actually “making common cause with reaction.” In this fashion, they try to frame any Maoist criticism of Gonzalo Thought as little more than revisionist or liquidationist garbage. Sadly (but not surprisingly), they do not bother to offer substantive analysis of their disagreements with others.

In a certain sense, there is not so much to say about the CPB(RF)’s response. Their silence on key topics speaks even louder than their polemic denunciation of Maoist criticism of Gonzalo.

Conclusion: A New International?

In both the Afghans’ criticism of the CPB(RF) and in the latter’s response, the question is raised of a new international organization of Maoist parties—a new Communist International. Despite clearly having different ideas about the nature of such an organization, both parties frame this issue in terms of the need to create a successor organization to RIM.

We agree that there is a need for greater exchange between Maoist organizations of theoretical ideas, and greater study of the experiences of the leading revolutionary movements in the world. International conferences as well as other forms of organization can play a positive role in this process. However discussion on these questions must also take into account lessons learned by the experience of the Third Communist International, which committed errors at times by functioning as the central committee of the various parties in the world, and hence neglecting the centrality of the primary contradictions in these countries. We believe RIM suffered by committing related mistakes, by arguing in effect that the body should operate under democratic centralism, risking replicating the incorrect path of the Comintern in exercising central (Soviet) control over individual communist parties. This may well have led leading parties around the world to avoid the organization, which then was largely led by the RCP (US), the Communist Party of Peru, and the Communist Party of Nepal (M-L). It would be helpful if the C(M)PA clarified their position on whether their proposal for a new international organization of Maoist parties would

replicate this method of leadership. It would also be helpful to know if they agree with this analysis that the push for democratic centralism in RIM was a mistake.

There is a great need for greater coordination and exchange between anti-revisionist communist organizations around the world. This would be a great boon to parties around the world and the ICM as a whole. Such forms of organization should include appropriate forums for discussion and debate of key theoretical questions, including over the verdicts of Maoism. Through this process unity can be achieved through struggle.

In contrast, the Brazilian Party and their various allies view the creation of a “New International Organization of the Proletariat” as key to developing “global people’s war.” This is related to their mechanical view of “people’s war until communism.”⁵⁴ The CPB(RF) are not alone in believing this to be the case; the other signatories of the 2018 May Day document and other subsequent joint declarations uphold the same basic position. In arguing that a vague global people’s war will lead to Communism, they seem to have also concluded that it will serve as a *deus ex machina* for all other problems facing the International Communist Movement as well. Not only will it magically bring about communism without the need for socialism or numerous cultural revolutions, a new Communist International also will be forged as a “product of the development of the People’s War on the planet.” Or so they say:

*We greet the revolution as the principal historical and political tendency in the world. We greet the upcoming realization of the International Unified Maoist Conference to give birth to the New International Organization of the Proletariat as an important step forward in the reunification of the International Communist Movement in a new International as product of the development of the People’s War on the planet.*⁵⁵

This view demonstrates a deep naivete about the complexity of the contradiction among the people, the way in which the masses internalize the ideology of the ruling class, and the need to overcome these ideas through a series of mass mobilizations and class struggles under socialism. In place of all of this and more, they posit that

54 <https://www.demvolkedieneen.org/index.php/en/t-dokumente-en/1270-celebrate-the-50th-anniversary-of-the-great-proletarian-cultural-revolution-with-people-s-war-until-communism>

55 <https://www.demvolkedieneen.org/index.php/en/t-dokumente-en/4008-proletarians-of-all-countries-unite-the-people-s-war-is-the-path-that-we-will-continue-until-communism>

a global war to overthrow the bourgeoisie will resolve everything. Thus, politics is reduced to a purely military matter, which should come as no surprise given their fixation on creating a militarized communist party.

What's more, it is surreal but unsurprising that the CPB(RF) claims that revolution is "the principal historical and political tendency in the world" right now. At present, even the most advanced revolutionary forces in the world (in India and the Philippines) are still in a relatively weak position in their own countries. They are fighting protracted people's wars and are both at the stage of strategic defensive. In Turkey there is a people's war as well, also relatively weak compared to the strength of the Turkish state. In most other countries around the world there are not even Maoist parties, let alone developed revolutionary movements under Maoist leadership. Despite some notable recent mass movements in different countries, it is absurd to argue that revolution is the principal trend in the world today.

This sort of denial of basic objective reality is part and parcel of their politics of "People's War Until Communism!" This one size-fits all approach to politics—and to handling contradictions in general—leads to all sorts of theoretical confusions, as we have seen above. If only things were so simple; if only every hurdle and obstacle in front of the ICM could be overcome as easily as these dogmatists dismiss questions about strategy and tactics with slogans.

In response to this idea of "Global People's War" and of a New International arising from it, we will share a quote from Ajith, criticizing a similar idea (albeit with a different flavor), promoted by Avakian:

Avakian argues that Lenin was willing to 'export revolution' but this was abandoned by those who came later. He cites the Red Army's drive on Warsaw as proof. The negative fallout of that move, the failure of the attempt made by the Comintern to initiate and directly guide revolution in Germany, the hindrances caused by Comintern advisors in China, the failure of the new states formed in East Europe to develop as socialist societies, in large part due to mainly relying on the Soviet army for their foundation and existence – Avakian has no time for these real lessons of history.

But they taught the communist movement that revolution cannot be exported, though they can and must be aided in all possible ways. Some instances of such international support were the participation of the International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War (errors in policy notwithstanding) and the direct role of revolutionary China in the Korean War.⁵⁶

Ajith's sharp criticism of Avakianism and the RCP's misunderstanding of the key lessons of revolutionary history apply equally well to the Brazilian Party and their fellow Gonzaloists. The idea of global people's war is just another fantasy of exporting the revolution and negates the need for communists of a given country to chart a course forward for the revolution in line with the particularities of their country. From this dogmatic perspective it is difficult if not impossible to understand and appreciate the significance of the work that Mao and the CCP did to apply Marxism to the particular situation in China (and thus developed Marxism). The CPB(RF) and their fellow Gonzaloists fail to grasp this fundamental lesson of Maoism, despite repeatedly describing themselves as "principally Maoist". There is not so much more to say about this sort of dogmatism. Their understanding of MLM is little more than a hodgepodge of slogans backed up by quotes cherry picked from communist theory.

In contrast, despite our disagreements with the Afghan party, we think that their views on the matter deserve a more detailed response.

Like the Brazilian Party, the C(M)PA also links the development of a new Communist International to questions of people's war. To their credit, they do not claim that a new International will come about as a product of "Global People's War" or anything like this. Instead they offer a clear analysis of the need to continue efforts to forge an international Maoist organization in the wake of the collapse of RIM.

Therefore, the struggles for arming the working class with MLM and the struggle to formulate a line and orientation for the international communist Maoist movement—forming an international Maoist conference and forming an international communist Maoist organization—is a task that needs to be pursued and

56 From Comrade Ajith's *Against Avakianism*, p. 29. Online here: <http://bannedthought.net/India/CPI-ML-Naxalbari/Naxalbari-Magazine/Naxalbari-04.pdf>

*should not be considered to have ended.*⁵⁷

History has taught us that international communist organizations do not appear *ex nihilo* or out of the flames of a revolutionary war. Rather, they are built by comrades and organizations working closely together to struggle over the key political questions of the day. Today, this include summing up the lessons of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, and the reversal in China (in particular on the class basis of the inner-party bourgeoisie) as well as the lessons of the successes and failures of Maoist parties since then. It is also important to develop clarity on the international situation, especially as inter-imperialist competition between the U.S. and China continues to escalate during this deepening economic depression.

Efforts to create a new International should also include close study of the successes and failures of RIM, and in particular the ways in which RIM repeated some mistakes of the Comintern. We know that C(M)PA has been involved in summing up these lessons, in particular the issues that arose in the mistakes made in Nepal and their relation to setbacks in RIM. We have significant disagreements with the Afghan Party's assessment of main obstacles in front of Maoist parties and organization in Europe and other imperialist countries. The C(M)PA goes so far as to state that the lack of strategy for PPW in imperialist countries is the "the great theoretical hurdle preventing [the] rapid progress" of Maoist organizations in these countries. They also argue that the role of an international Maoist conference is to sketch out a general model of such a strategy:

Advancements in the implementation of Maoism within the bellies of the imperialist beasts in Europe, for establishing or re-establishing Maoist communist parties, exist in several European countries. However, the great theoretical hurdle preventing their rapid progress is not the issue of the strategy of people's war in general, a strategy that should be accepted by the entire international Maoist movement, but in fact the problematic of the modality of people's war in imperialist countries that so far has not been resolved by the international Maoist movement nor by the Maoist forces in imperialist countries. What has

been expressed at the level of the international Maoist movement, as well as particular Maoist forces in imperialist countries, is to question the 1917 October Revolution as a general model applicable to imperialist countries, but without sketching a concrete theoretical model of implementing people's war in opposition to the October 1917 model.

*We believe that providing such a clear theoretical model is the task of an international Maoist conference and it should be resolved at the international level. Sectarian formulations and actions that result in the further dispersion of the international Maoist forces will also not result in anything and will go nowhere practically.*⁵⁸

It is true that the adherents of the theory of the universality of PPW have done little to clarify how they envision it playing out in imperialist countries. Vague metaphors and simplified demographic analysis (e.g. the existence of semi-urban slums of oppressed nationalities surrounding many cities in the U.S.) are combined with slogans and proclaimed to be strategy by many European and American Gonzaloists. However, all these formulations generally reveal is their authors' ignorance of even the most basic ideas laid out by Mao in *On Protracted War*.

Despite these obvious issues, we do not believe that the approach proposed by the Afghan Party is a real solution to these problems. First and foremost, as we have already stated in our prior document *Protracted People's War is Not a Universal Strategy for Revolution*⁵⁹, we do not believe that protracted people's war is a strategy applicable in imperialist countries. Nor do we think that the key obstacle in front of Maoist parties and organizations in imperialist countries is to develop a general theoretical model for revolution in imperialist countries. One already exists, the October Road, which needs to be studied, understood and adapted to the particularities of the country and question, just as Lenin and the Bolsheviks updated and adapted the approach taken in the Paris Commune.

Given this, our view is that the key obstacles in front of Maoist revolutionaries in imperialist countries actually varies country to country and situation to situation.

57 http://www.sholajawid.org/english/main_english/A%20Glimpse%20at%20the%20Joint%20International%20Statement.pdf (page 3)

58 http://www.sholajawid.org/english/main_english/A%20Glimpse%20at%20the%20Joint%20International%20Statement.pdf (page 13)

59 This document was published previously by the Mass Proletariat organization, from which many members of MCU hail. We are republishing it here in this first issue of *Red Pages*.

While there is a basic need to go among the people, develop links with them and bring MLM to them, and build up a Maoist Party, the devil is in the details.

At a given moment in a given country the struggle against economism may be the key link (as it was at the turn of the 20th century in Russia), and gaining clarity on this deviation and its pitfalls may be the key task for Maoist forces. At the same time, in a different country it may be that the Maoist party there needs to rapidly adapt to a rightward shift in the state, and go underground as most legal activity becomes impossible. Developing a theoretical understanding of how to do this would then be “the great theoretical hurdle” of that moment for Maoists in that country. In a different place at a different time there may be a need to analyze and understand the dynamics of an impending civil war between sections of the ruling class. The list goes on.

Even if PPW was a viable strategy in imperialist countries—it is not—it would still be a form of dogmatism to see achieving theoretical clarity on “the modality of people’s war in imperialist countries” as the *key theoretical obstacle in front of all Maoist organizations in imperialist countries*.

In our view it would be much more productive for an initial international conference of Maoist organizations and parties to focus on developing some basic unity around the key lessons of MLM as well as discussing and debating the international situation, especially the increasingly sharp inter-imperialist competition between the U.S. and China. Right now, there is serious disarray and confusion within the International Communist Movement. The parties in India and the Philippines are a beacon of hope for the people of the world, but in most countries communists are not even organized into a Maoist Party. Opportunism, dogmatism, and adventurism are quite prominent. In many imperialist countries—and even in the urban centers of neocolonial countries—those interested in communist politics are negatively influenced by imperialist culture, especially that promoted through social media which reduces communism to a series of slogan and memes. This tendency has played a major role in promoting the rise of dogmatism and Gonzaloism within the ICM.

While Gonzaloism itself is a major deviation, other parties—including the C(M)PA—are influenced by this deviation, for example in promoting ideas like the

universality of protracted people’s war. Struggling against these deviations and promoting clarity on the fundamental lessons of Maoism is an essential task in front of the ICM, and something that should be taken up by any international conference of Maoist organizations.

As the present economic crisis intensifies, the coronavirus pandemic continues to wreak havoc on the people of the world, and inter-imperialist competition intensifies, it is imperative that Maoist forces around the world engage in principled discussion and debate of key topics. We set a future conference as a key way to advancing clarity within the International Communist Movement on key political questions. We also hope that this document has contributed to the larger line struggle against Gonzaloism in some modest way.

Protracted People's War is Not a Universal Strategy for Revolution¹

PROTRACTED PEOPLE'S WAR (PPW) has been promoted as a universal strategy for revolution in recent years despite the fact that this directly contradicts Mao's conclusions in his writing on revolutionary strategy. Mao emphasized PPW was possible in China because of the semi-feudal nature of Chinese society, and because of antagonistic divisions within the white regime which encircled the red base areas. Basic analysis shows that the strategy cannot be practically applied in the U.S. or other imperialist countries. Despite this, advocates for the universality of PPW claim that support for their thesis is a central principle of Maoism. In this document we refute these claims, and outline a revolutionary strategy based on an analysis of the concrete conditions of the U.S. state.

In our view, confusion on foundational questions of revolutionary strategy, and lack of familiarity with Mao's writings on the actual strategy of PPW, has led to the growth of dogmatic and ultra-“left” tendencies within the U.S. Maoist movement. Some are unaware of the nature of the struggle in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) against Wang Ming, Li Lisan, and other dogmatists. As a result, they conflate Mao's critique of an insurrectionary strategy in China with a critique of insurrection as a strategy for revolution in general. Some advocate for the formation of base areas and for guerrilla warfare in imperialist countries, while others negate PPW as a concrete revolutionary strategy, reducing it to an abstract generality or a label for focoist armed struggle. Many

have also uncritically accepted everything Gonzalo—the imprisoned chairman of the Communist Party of Peru (PCP)—ever said. Others are negatively influenced by the petty-bourgeois adventurism of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Canada's (PCR-RCP) early documents.²

Our view is that PPW is not a universal strategy for revolution. Instead, we believe revolutionaries in imperialist countries must do legal and illegal work now to build the strength of the proletariat and to advance the formation of a Maoist party that will be fundamental to hastening the development of a nationwide revolutionary situation. A principled Maoist party will then be able to coordinate a number of insurrections in major cities, seize state power, and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. Our hope in writing this document is to clarify some misconceptions and, in doing so, to clarify the basis for principled unity among those not consolidated to a dogmatic approach to revolutionary politics and struggle.

We will begin by discussing Mao's writings on PPW and his struggle against the dogmatists of his time. We hope doing so can clarify the actual content of PPW as a revolutionary strategy. We will then investigate and critique the theories of certain groups and individual who claim that PPW is universal. We will conclude with a brief exposition of our views on Maoist strategy for revolution in the U.S.

1. Mao's Writings on Protracted People's War

IN THE COURSE of the Chinese Revolution, Mao and others in the CCP developed a new revolutionary strategy, suitable to the specific conditions of Chinese society. At the time, China was a semi-feudal, semi-capitalist, and semi-colonial country. There were major contradictions between the town and countryside. Importantly, at the time the vast majority of the population resided in the countryside, and the state's military forces were largely concentrated in urban areas. Through a detailed investigation of these concrete conditions, and through analyzing

the failures of the 1927 insurrections in Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Nanchang, Mao came to the conclusion that there was a need to build rural base areas and grow power from there.

As the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Maoist)—hereafter referred to as CPI (Maoist)—said in a recent document:

The great Marxist teacher Mao applied the concept

1 This document was previously published by the Mass Proletariat organization, from which many of our members hail. We are re-publishing it here in the hopes of increasing its reach and reaching new audiences.

2 We say this in reference to their early documents, because the recent split has left two factions, one consolidated to left-adventurism and one to right-opportunism.

*of unequal development in imperialism to the specific (semi-feudal, semi-colonial, colonial) conditions of China. He said that country wide liberation is not possible at a time and found out the path of Protracted People's War in which, country wide success would be achieved by extending from a base area in the vast backward rural area where the enemy is weak to many base areas, extending from small areas to extended areas thus liberating the rural areas first and finally encircle and seize the cities.*³

From this we can see that it was because of the particular situation in China that simultaneous country-wide insurrections—such as occurred during the October Revolution—were not a viable strategy for revolution at that time. These conditions did not make revolution in China impossible; instead, they required the development of a new revolutionary strategy suitable to the

semi-feudal, semi-colonial, semi-capitalist conditions in China. It was on this basis that Mao worked out the strategy of PPW. This entailed building revolutionary base areas in the countryside, where reactionary forces had trouble projecting military power, approaching military work as a political task, and engaging in a prolonged conflict so that the relative weakness of revolutionary forces could be turned into the opposite, relative strength. The CCP eventually encircled the cities, and won nation-wide victory in 1949. However, the objective conditions suited to PPW do not exist everywhere in the world, especially in imperialist countries where the military forces of the ruling classes can be easily deployed anywhere in the country in a matter of hours, where there is a relatively well-equipped police force in all but the most remote areas, and where infrastructure for transport and communications is well-developed and comprehensive.

Why is it That Red Political Power Can Exist in China?

In his 1928 document *Why is it That Red Political Power Can Exist in China?* Mao stated, “The long-term survival inside a country of one or more small areas under Red political power completely encircled by a White regime is a phenomenon that has never occurred anywhere else in the world. There are special reasons for this unusual phenomenon. It can exist and develop only under certain conditions.”⁴ Mao also stated that “it [red political power] cannot occur in any imperialist country or in any colony under direct imperialist rule.” This refutation of the pos-

sibility of developing red base areas (which are the foundation of PPW) in an imperialist country makes it clear that, as far as Mao was concerned, PPW was not a universal strategy for revolution, but rather one suited to the particular conditions of China in the 1920s-1940s.

Some have used later historical experiences—which showed that red base areas can exist in colonies and neo-colonies under direct imperialist rule—to say that Mao's view that PPW is not possible in imperialist countries is also incorrect.⁵ Historical experience has shown

3 Central Committee of CPI (Maoist), “CPI(Maoist) on the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution,” *People's War*, No. 11, p. 28. Available here: [http://www.bannedthought.net/India/People'sWar-CPI\(Maoist\)/PW11-March2017-Eng-View.pdf](http://www.bannedthought.net/India/People'sWar-CPI(Maoist)/PW11-March2017-Eng-View.pdf)

4 Mao, “*Why is it That Red Political Power Can Exist in China?*”, *MZSW*, vol 1., p 63-72. available at: https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1_3.htm

5 For clarification on this matter, see footnote #7 in *Why is it That Red Political Power Can Exist in China?*:

“During World War II, many colonial countries in the East formerly under the imperialist rule of Britain, the United States, Prance and the Netherlands were occupied by the Japanese imperialists. Led by their Communist Parties, the masses of workers, peasants and urban petty bourgeoisie and members of the national bourgeoisie in these countries took advantage of the contradictions between the British, U.S., French and Dutch imperialists on the one hand and the Japanese imperialists on the other, organized a broad united front against fascist aggression, built anti-Japanese base areas and waged bitter guerrilla warfare against the Japanese. Thus the political situation existing prior to World War II began to change. When the Japanese imperialists were driven out of these countries at the end of World War II, the imperialists of the United States, Britain, France and the Netherlands attempted to restore their colonial rule, but, having built up armed forces of considerable strength during the anti-Japanese war, these colonial peoples refused to return to the old way of life. Moreover, the imperialist system all over the world was profoundly shaken because the Soviet Union had become strong, because all the imperialist powers, except the United States, had either been overthrown or weakened in the war, and finally because the imperialist front was breached in China by the victorious Chinese revolution. Thus, much as in China, it has become possible for the peoples of all, or at least some, of the colonial countries in the East to maintain big and small revolutionary base areas and revolutionary regimes over a long period of time, and to carry on long-term revolutionary wars in which to surround the cities from the countryside, and then gradually to advance to take the cities and win nation-wide victory. The view held by Comrade Mao Tse-tung in 1928 on the question of establishing independent regimes in colonies under

that PPW is a successful revolutionary strategy, even in a country under direct colonial rule, but there is no historical experience of successfully carrying out PPW in an imperialist country. Further, the experience of urban guerrillas⁶ and similar strategies show that attempts to apply the strategy of PPW to the particularities of an imperialist country will only lead to disaster.⁷

In China at the time—as in India and the Philippines today—the lack of development of productive forces in the countryside (in particular roads and other methods of transit) provided real obstacles to reactionary forces’ ability to deploy military power to crush the military and political power of the red guerrilla areas.⁸ As has been stated though, in an imperialist country such as the U.S. the police, national guard, and army can be deployed to any section of the country in a matter of hours. This reality prevents the development of red base areas. As Mao points out, “it is definitely impossible to create an independent regime, let alone an independent regime which is durable and grows daily, unless we have regular forces of adequate strength.” Given the strength, coordination, and training of the repressive forces in a country like the U.S. we are kidding ourselves if we think we can accumulate such a force and hold a base area without being crushed.

On Protracted War

Many cite Mao’s 1938 document *On Protracted War* in support of their claims that PPW is a universal revolutionary strategy.⁹ Mao’s document is a long and very in-depth analysis of the anti-Japanese war, which shows how the concrete conditions in both Japan and China dictated that the war of resistance against Japan would be protracted, that it would be difficult and long, but that—despite these obstacles—China could win. There is nothing in

this document which states or implies that PPW is a universal strategy for revolution. As Mao’s analysis shows, it was the specific conditions of the anti-Japanese War in semi-feudal, semi-colonial, semi-capitalist China, that made PPW a viable strategy for resistance and revolution. While there are certainly lessons in this document that are applicable to all warfare and all revolutionary struggles—and therefore universal—this is quite different than the *strategy* of PPW being applicable everywhere, regardless of the objective conditions. We will attempt to provide clarity on this matter through some detailed analysis of *On Protracted War*.

Mao wrote *On Protracted War* in order to challenge two widespread and incorrect theories that were prevalent in China at the time: the theory of national subjugation and the theory of quick victory. The former theory held that there was no basis for China to win the war against Japan, and from this, concluded that the best thing to do would be to surrender to Japan. The latter theory held that China was ready to win victory after victory against the invading Japanese forces, and therefore concluded that the CCP should mount a major offensive, committing its forces to an all-out attack to drive Japan from China in one blow. Both of these theories were incorrect. The adherents of “national subjugation” saw only the present strength of the Japanese military and the technical deficiencies of the Chinese forces—they ignored the progressive character of China’s cause, the basis to unite all of China against Japan, and the huge population size of China. Likewise, the adherents of “quick victory” saw only victory in specific campaigns or battles, and because of this subjectivism, failed to make an accurate assessment of the strength of the enemy.

Although both theories evaluated the relative

direct imperialist rule has changed as a result of the changes in the situation.”

- 6 For example, the PCR-RCP refers to and upholds the experiences of Italian Red Brigades and Belgian Communist Combatant Cells as positive examples of the successes of urban guerrilla warfare. We discuss this more below in this document. Also c.f. the PCR-RCP’s document *Protracted People’s War is the Only Way to Make Revolution*, available here: <http://www.pcr-rcp.ca/old/en/pwd/1e.php>
- 7 Some point to the left-adventurist groups in Europe such as the Red Brigades and the Red Army Faction as examples of PPW in an imperialist country, but we disagree with this assessment. Leaving aside the fact that these groups saw only very limited success in mass struggles or in their military campaigns, their strategy is more accurately termed urban guerrilla warfare, and has basically nothing in common with the strategy of PPW practiced by the CCP. We discuss this in more detail below.
- 8 The Indian state is currently actively working to construct road, rail, and communications infrastructure as a key part of its all-out war on the people. “In order to loot the natural resources in the areas of movement and help speedy shifting of forces in repressive operations the central government is expanding Road and Rail lines since 2009. For the past two years it has been developing Communication and Information systems too. In the scheme to lay 5477 kms of State and National High Ways, 3887 kms of road was completed by last year.” from *People’s War*, No. 11, p. 128.
- 9 *On Protracted War* was originally a series of lectures that Mao gave at Yen’an in 1938. Mao, *On Protracted War*, Mao Zedong’s Selected Works (MZSW) vol. 3, p.113-194. The full text is available online here: https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_09.htm

strength of Japan and China differently, they shared a common flaw: they saw the situation one-sidedly and subjectively, looking at only some aspects and ignoring or dismissing others. Doing so necessarily leads to mistakes, because “if appraisal does not conform to reality, action cannot attain its objective.”¹⁰ Our contemporary dogmatists would do well to learn from Mao’s criticism of these two theories, but they are too busy phrase-mongering about the so-called “universality of PPW” to reflect on the dialectical relation between the struggles of Mao’s time and our situation today. Instead—and much like the dogmatists of Mao’s time—they negate the dialectical relation between the universal and the particular, and instead turn Marxism into a stale dogma which they seek to mechanically apply to their situation. This cannot but lead to disaster.

To avoid such mistakes, we must remember that Mao wrote about the specific situation of China’s war of resistance against Japan, and from this analysis drew conclusions about the development of the war and what was needed to attain victory. Mao’s analysis and conclusions are particular to the specific conditions of the Anti-Japanese War, but through a dialectical materialist approach we can apply *some of these lessons* to our own situation.¹¹ This is quite different than the approach of our contemporary dogmatists who seek to apply the strategy of PPW in imperialist countries “regardless of objective conditions.”

One such lesson from *On Protracted War* which is relevant to our particular situation—despite the differences with occupied China—is the relation between a political organization, the masses, and the enemies of the people. Mao says that:

Many people think that it is wrong methods that make for strained relations between officers and men and between the army and the people, but I always tell them that it is a question of basic attitude (or basic principle), of having respect for the soldiers and the people. It is from this attitude that the various policies, methods and forms ensue. If we depart from this at-

titude, then the policies, methods and forms will certainly be wrong, and the relations between officers and men and between the army and the people are bound to be unsatisfactory. Our three major principles for the army’s political work are, first, unity between officers and men; second, unity between the army and the people; and third, the disintegration of the enemy forces. To apply these principles effectively, we must start with this basic attitude of respect for the soldiers and the people, and of respect for the human dignity of prisoners of war once they have laid down their arms. Those who take all this as a technical matter and not one of basic attitude are indeed wrong, and they should correct their view.¹²

We in the U.S. are not currently engaged in armed conflict with the state, but these points are still very relevant to our work. Mao shows how the basis for political and military successes are: first and foremost the internal unity and proletarian principles of an organization, secondly, the relation between this organization and the masses, and thirdly the organization’s ability to defeat the enemy. These points hold in military conflict as much as in workplace and neighborhood organizing. It is only by building a principled political unity in our organization, cultivating a pro-people orientation, and making deep links with the masses that it is possible to win victories in political struggle.

It is important to note that Mao lists “disintegration of the enemy forces” as the third key principle for the army. He subordinates this task to the need for unity within the army and the need for unity between the people and the army. This does not reflect an arbitrary ordering but instead a materialist analysis of the basis for defeating the enemy: principled unity within the army and with the people is a precondition for the destruction of the enemy. “Left”-adventurist groups that wrongly call their fantasies of urban guerrilla warfare campaigns PPW have totally forgotten or missed this point. They place primary importance on the military aspect of their work and relegate the masses to a secondary role. This represents a

10 From the section of *On Protracted War* titled “The Theory of National Subjugation is Wrong and the Theory of Quick Victory is Likewise Wrong”

11 A dialectical materialist approach to analyzing past revolutionary struggles is based on a concrete study of their particularities to draw out the universal lessons of these struggles. In contrast, dogmatists skip this step and proclaim past revolutionary experiences “universal” without bothering to investigate their particularity in significant detail.

12 From the section of *On Protracted War* titled “The Army and the People are the Foundation of Victory”

fundamentally petty-bourgeois and anti-people orientation.¹³

Another key point that Mao discusses in *On Protracted War* is the need to align thinking and doing. This clearly applies regardless of whether PPW is employed as a revolutionary strategy. Mao says that:

Ideas, etc. are subjective, while deeds or actions are the subjective translated into the objective, but both represent the dynamic role peculiar to human beings. We term this kind of dynamic role 'man's conscious dynamic role,' and it is a characteristic that distinguishes man from all other beings. All ideas based upon and corresponding to objective facts are correct ideas, and all deeds or actions based upon correct ideas are correct actions. We must give full scope to these ideas and actions, to this dynamic role.¹⁴

This point can seem obvious, or simple, but it is actually a key aspect of the dialectical materialist world outlook. What does it mean to take a revolutionary approach to handling contradictions? What does it mean to study something deeply and from all sides? One aspect of this can be summed up as “dare to think, dare to act.” Through careful reflection on our practice and on revolutionary theory we can develop correct ideas about our situation, which guide our political action. Instead of reciting formulas and waiting for orders we all need to “frown our brows and think it over” so that we can act in a manner which furthers the cause of proletarian revolution, otherwise our ideas will not conform to reality and our actions will have poor results.

From this it should be clear that *On Protracted War* contains lessons for revolutionary warfare in general, and lessons particular to the Anti-Japanese war. It also contains some lessons which have a lot of relevance for our current situation, despite the fact that we are not waging a revolutionary war at present. However, the fact

that there are lessons which are relevant to our situation does not mean that everything that Mao wrote in *On Protracted War* applies to our situation, nor does it imply that PPW is a universal strategy for revolution. Instead of trying to mechanically apply past strategies to our present situation, we must draw insights from studying revolutionary history. Past revolutionaries have dealt with many questions which are relevant to the present, but we also have to grapple with many questions that are new. To relate revolutionary theory to our present situation in a dynamic and vibrant way requires us to grapple with how our situation relates to past situations; how it is different and how it is similar.

To clarify this point, it is enough to look at how comrades in the CPI (Maoist) are applying the lessons of the Russian Revolution to the particularities of their struggle, despite the fact that they are pursuing a fundamentally different revolutionary strategy than the Russian Communists did. In 2013 CPI (Maoist) launched a campaign to “Bolshevise” the party and the People’s Liberation Guerrilla Army. This effort was to steel comrades “to overcome the difficult situation and the setback of the movement” through working to improve “class consciousness, dedication towards revolution, strong will, sacrificing self and courage of the proletarian vanguard.”¹⁵ In this campaign, CPI (Maoist) is working to apply the lessons learned in the Russian Revolution to their particular situation, focusing on the need for disciplined professional revolutionaries. As they put it:

We conducted the [Bolshevisation] campaign concentrating on the universality of MLM, with the dialectical understanding that revolutionary movement travels through a lot of ebbs and flows and finally succeeds, and concentrating on the Three great styles of work. We took up education on theoretical, political and organizational understanding all over the Party to Bolshevise it.¹⁶

13 For a typical example, see the PCR-RCP’s negation of the importance of open mass organizations prior to the seizure of a city via insurrection—which they refer to as strategic equilibrium in PPW in an imperialist country:

“The major difference in the application of protracted people’s war in imperialist countries is the duration of each of its transitory steps and their content. In an oppressed country, guerrilla warfare can remain for a long time at the stage of strategic stalemate because it can rest on stable base areas. In an imperialist country, this phase consists of the moment when guerrillas and the revolutionary masses concentrate their forces in order to launch an insurrection to take possession of a major city that will allow the mass-generated organizations to take solidly and permanently root (on an open basis). This period marks the transition between strategic defensive and strategic offensive.”

from “Protracted People’s War is the Only Way to Make Revolution.” We discuss the PCR-RCP in greater detail below.

14 From the section of *On Protracted War* titled “Man’s Dynamic Role in War”

15 *People’s War*, No. 11, p. 140.

16 *People’s War*, No. 11, p. 137.

Comrades in CPI (Maoist) clearly understand the importance of applying universal lessons from revolutionary history to their particular situation. The same cannot be said of dogmatists who argue that PPW is universal because some of the points from *On Protracted War* apply to our situation. This incorrect claim has been used to support the theory that armed propaganda and urban guerilla warfare in imperialist countries during non-revolutionary situations will lead to the formation of urban base areas and liberated cities or neighborhoods.¹⁷ But—as we stated before—there is a difference between PPW being a universal strategy for revolution and some aspects of *On Protracted War* being applicable now or in a future revolutionary war. It is precisely this distinction that dogmatists work to obscure, which ultimately results in an “everything is everything” kind of sophistry. The absurdity of this approach to theory is evident when our dogmatists claim, for example, that the Bolshevik revolution and the Chinese war of resistance against Japan were both PPWs because they are both “protracted processes.”¹⁸

This point cannot be stated strongly enough: PPW, as put forward by Mao, is a concrete type of revolutionary warfare, one that is initiated in the hinterland of a country oppressed by imperialism, where red political power can be built despite encirclement by a white regime, and where there is a semi-feudal mode of production. If one forgets this they actually take the position of the 28½ Bolsheviks (the dogmatists of Mao’s time). It was they who insisted that there was not a substantial difference in conditions between Russia in 1917 and China in the 1920s and 30s, and insisted that the same general mode of revolutionary struggle was appropriate to, and possible in, both situations, and every other national situation, regardless of particularity. The fact that the 28½

Bolsheviks said that insurrection was the correct and universal strategy and our contemporary dogmatists instead say the same of PPW does not indicate forward movement. Instead, this repackaged dogmatism will only lead to disaster, as resulted from the Chinese dogmatist’s strategy of urban insurrections in 1927 and from the related positional strategy adopted in defense of the Jiangxi-Fujian Soviet in 1934.¹⁹

Those who say that *On Protracted War* shows that PPW is a universal revolutionary strategy fail to understand Mao’s writing. They interpret the document as dogma, and selectively read parts of it, using a shallow and surface level analysis to justify their position. Mao’s document is a powerful example of concrete analysis of a concrete situation, of determining the primary contradiction (between the Chinese people and the Japanese fascists), and of working out a line to resolve this contradiction. Organizing for revolution in an imperialist country like the U.S. demands the same of us: through engagement with mass struggles and the development of revolutionary pre-party formations, we must build up a party with an all-country perspective, concretely analyze the situation at a national level, and work out a line for making revolution here by applying revolutionary theory to our concrete conditions. *On Protracted War* has much to teach us about how to rely on the masses, how to align thinking and doing, and how important it is to “dare to think and dare to act.” What it doesn’t provide us with is a ready-made plan for making revolution, or a single shred of evidence that PPW is a revolutionary strategy suited to our situation.

17 Exactly how the particularities of PPW will play out in an imperialist country varies in the articulations of different contemporary dogmatists. This is just a general outline of one articulation, we will deal with it and others in greater depth in Section 2 of this paper.

18 The blog *Maosoleum* made this claim in an article titled *What is Protracted People’s War?*, available here: <https://maosoleum.wordpress.com/2013/10/07/what-is-protracted-peoples-war/>. The PCR-RCP makes similar claims in *More on the Question of Waging Revolutionary War in the Imperialist Countries*, here: <http://www.pcr-rpc.ca/en/archives/1164>. This sort of position has also been repeated by Joshua Moufawad-Paul (JMP) on his blog *MLM Mayhem!* many times, for a representative example see: <https://moufawad-paul.blogspot.co.il/2012/02/on-protracted-peoples-war-as-universal.html>. Common to these theorizations of PPW is a negation of its concrete content in favor of a nebulous “universal applicability.” The PCR-RCP and JMP articulations are discussed in more detail below.

19 c.f. Mao’s comments in his interview with Edgar Snow in *Red Star Over China*, p. 480-486: “In this period we made two important errors. The first was the failure to unite with Ts’ai T’ing-k’ai’s army in 1933 during the Fukien Rebellion. The second was the adoption of the erroneous strategy of simple defense, abandoning our former tactics of maneuver. It was a serious mistake to meet the vastly superior Nanking forces in positional warfare, at which the Red Army was neither technically nor spiritually at its best.” p. 197. Snow discusses these errors in greater detail in an endnote in the 1968 edition of *Red Star Over China*. In particular, he stresses the central role that Stalin, the Comintern, and the 28½ Bolsheviks (in Russia they were also referred to as “Stalin’s China Section”) played in undermining Mao’s line during this period. Snow highlights how Otto Braun—then the Comintern representative to China—and the 28½ Bolsheviks advocated for positional warfare against Chiang Kai-Shek’s fifth extermination campaign, and how this led to the effective destruction of the Jiangxi-Fujian Soviet.

Mao on Revolutionary Strategy in the Imperialist Countries

As Maoists we should not engage in book worship, nor should we take everything that someone says—even a great revolutionary like Mao—as automatically correct. Instead we should deeply study the arguments put forward, and come to conclusions about how these arguments relate to our own situation.²⁰ We have a few examples of Mao's views on the question of revolutionary strategy in imperialist countries, and it is important to consider his arguments. In 1938 he stated:

The seizure of power by armed force, the settlement of the issue by war, is the central task and the highest form of revolution. This Marxist-Leninist principle of revolution holds good universally, for China and for all other countries.

But while the principle remains the same, its application by the party of the proletariat finds expression in varying ways according to the varying conditions. Internally, capitalist countries practice bourgeois democracy (not feudalism) when they are not fascist or not at war; in their external relations, they are not oppressed by, but themselves oppress, other nations. Because of these characteristics, it is the task of the party of the proletariat in the capitalist countries to educate the workers and build up strength through a long period of legal struggle, and thus prepare for the final overthrow of capitalism. In these countries, the question is one of a long legal struggle, of utilizing parliament as a platform, of economic and political strikes, of organizing trade unions and educating the workers.

There the form of organization is legal and the form of struggle bloodless (non-military). On the issue of war, the Communist Parties in the capitalist countries oppose the imperialist wars waged by their own countries; if such wars occur, the policy of these Parties is to bring about the defeat of the reactionary governments of their own countries. The one war they want to fight is the civil war for which they are preparing. But this insurrection and war should not be launched until the bourgeoisie becomes really helpless, until the majority of the proletariat are determined to rise in arms and fight, and until the rural masses are giving willing help to the proletariat. And when the time comes to launch such an insurrection and war, the first step will be to seize the cities, and then advance into the countryside, and not the other way around. All this has been done by Communist Parties in capitalist countries, and it has been proved correct by the October Revolution in Russia.

China is different however. The characteristics of China are that she is not independent and democratic but semi-colonial and semi-feudal, that internally she has no democracy but is under feudal oppression and that in her external relations she has no national independence but is oppressed by imperialism. It follows that we have no parliament to make use of and no legal right to organize the workers to strike. Basically, the task of the Communist Party here is not to go through a long period of legal struggle before launching insurrection and war, and not to seize the big cities first and then occupy the countryside, but the reverse.²¹

While we do not agree with every aspect of what

20 Malcolm X gave a speech in 1964 to a group of young people from Mississippi who had traveled to New York where he summed up this idea:

“One of the first things I think young people, especially nowadays, should learn is how to see for yourself and listen for yourself and think for yourself: Then you can come to an intelligent decision for yourself. If you form the habit of going by what you hear others say about someone, or going by what others think about someone, instead of searching that thing out for yourself and seeing for yourself, you will be walking west when you think you're going east, and you will be walking east when you think you're going west. This generation, especially of our people, has a burden, more so than any other time in history. The most important thing that we can learn to do today is think for ourselves.

“It's good to keep wide-open ears and listen to what everybody else has to say, but when you come to make a decision, you have to weigh all of what you've heard on its own, and place it where it belongs, and come to a decision for yourself; you'll never regret it. But if you form the habit of taking what someone else says about a thing without checking it out for yourself, you'll find that other people will have you hating your friends and loving your enemies. This is one of the things that our people are beginning to learn today- that it is very important to think out a situation for yourself. If you don't do it, you'll always be maneuvered into a situation where you are never fighting your actual enemies, where you will find yourself fighting your own self.”

From *Malcolm X Talks to Young People*, p. 4. Available online here: <http://collections.mun.ca/PDFs/radical/MalcomXTalkstoYoungPeople.pdf>

21 Mao, *Problems of War and Strategy*, MZSW, Vol. 2, p. 219-220. Available online at https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_12.htm

Mao says here, it is important that we appreciate the dialectical method by which he answers this question. Mao correctly states that “the seizure of power by armed force [...] holds good universally.” The dialectical relationship of the particular to the universal dictates that we apply universal lessons according to the particular conditions of the country where we are working. As an extension of this logic, Mao argues that PPW is not a viable strategy in imperialist countries. In semi-feudal oppressed countries where the population is mainly rural it is possible to initially build the revolutionary movement in the countryside through the creation of red base areas which can be defended from reactionary forces.

In imperialist countries organizing for revolution requires different strategy and tactics. We believe Mao, in his 1938 statement, was incorrect in arguing that this way would be a primarily legal and parliamentary route.²² This aspect of his assessment was corrected in his future writing on the subject. However, Mao never argued that PPW was a universal strategy for revolution. In imperialist countries such a strategy is not possible and we will instead have to build forces over a long period of time to prepare for coordinated insurrections in many cities across the country. What’s more, the way we organize for revolution and wage revolutionary war will need to be developed based on an ongoing investigation of the conditions of our country. This is not an academic task, but rather requires concrete analysis, study of revolutionary theory, involvement in political struggles all across the country, and work to concentrate the correct ideas of the masses. However, those who dogmatically insist that PPW is a universal revolutionary strategy and therefore applicable in all countries negate the dialectical materialist world-view, and in doing so, negate the importance of investigating the particularity of their national situation.

This amounts to seeing revolutionary theory as gospel instead of understanding it as derived from lessons drawn from the long history of actual revolutionary struggles the world over.

Some advocate that we discard all of what Mao said in the above quote on the grounds that he called for a legal approach to revolutionary organizing in imperialist countries. These efforts to dismiss all of the what Mao had to say are grounded in a metaphysical worldview, and they open the door to the dogmatic claim of the “universality of PPW.” The metaphysicians who advocate for this approach cannot grasp the dialectical relation between correct and incorrect ideas. While the majority of what Mao said in 1938 on war and strategy was correct, there were secondary aspects that were incorrect. Instead of totally negating what Mao said in 1938 because certain aspects were incorrect—and putting in its place claims of the universality of PPW—we should unite with what is correct in what he said and disagree with what is incorrect.

Furthermore, Mao’s views on the strategy for revolution in imperialist countries developed over time. In 1963, when discussing the strategy for revolution in imperialist countries, Mao and others stated that,

In order to lead the proletariat and working people in revolution, Marxist-Leninist Parties must master all forms of struggle and be able to substitute one form for another quickly as the conditions of struggle change. The vanguard of the proletariat will remain unconquerable in all circumstances only if it masters all forms of struggle—peaceful and armed, open and secret, legal and illegal, parliamentary struggle and mass struggle, etc. It is wrong to refuse to use parliamentary and other legal forms of struggle when they can and should be used. However, if a Marxist-Le-

22 In our view, these comments about legal organizing in imperialist countries reflect the negative influence of the Comintern’s mechanical conception of the United Front, as demonstrated by their approach to the popular front against fascism in WWII. Starting in 1935 Stalin and others in the Comintern advocated that communist parties liquidate their political work in favor of alliances with bourgeois democrats and imperialists in opposition to fascism. While this policy correctly identified the alliance of fascist imperialist powers as the primary enemies of the people of the world, it incorrectly advocated a liberal unity with the bourgeoisie in non-Fascist countries. Communist parties were encouraged/commanded to subordinate their initiative to that of the bourgeoisie in their country. Some of the most disastrous examples of this policy were in colonial and semi-colonial countries.

This took a particularly terrible turn after the signing of the Anglo-Soviet Agreement in the wake of which the Comintern ordered the Communist Party of India (CPI) to subordinate themselves to the Communist Party of Great Britain. Because the United Kingdom was now a Soviet ally in the war against Germany, CPI was also encouraged to work to undermine the anti-colonial national liberation movement in India, and cadre even went so far as to act as informants for the British colonial administration on the activities of national liberation struggle. c.f. Jan Myrdal’s account of this in *Red Star Over India: As the Wretched of the Earth are Rising. Impressions, Reflections and Preliminary Inferences*. (Delhi: Archana Das and Subrata Das, 2012), p. 77-78, and his comments in *India Waits* (Chicago: Lake View Press, 1986) p. xii-xiii, and 229-230. Myrdal’s books focus extensively on this and other questions in the ICM, and contain many important insights into the successes and failures of the popular front against fascism during WWII.

*ninist Party falls into legalism or parliamentary cretinism, confining the struggle within the limits permitted by the bourgeoisie, this will inevitably lead to renouncing the proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat.*²³

The dialectical nature of reality, in which statements are a mix of correct and incorrect ideas confuses those who have a metaphysical world outlook. Because they see things as one-sided and pure, they cannot grasp the nature of contradiction, and assume that Mao's writing in 1938 was totally incorrect. In place of dialectics, they practice metaphysics. These people assume that, along with Mao's statement about legal work, we should also discard what he said about the need for insurrection and (civil) war as a path to revolution in imperialist countries. We see no reason to do this, given that Mao's conclusion about revolutionary strategy in imperialist countries is based on concrete analysis and has not been disproven in practice. Instead of investigating the contradictions at play in imperialist countries, learning from the history of past revolutions, and working out a line to develop revolutionary politics in their situation, our contemporary dogmatists make endless proclamations about the universality of PPW.

CPI (Maoist) on Revolutionary Strategy in Capitalist Countries

In their 2004 document *Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution*, CPI (Maoist) put forward their views on revolutionary strategy in the bourgeois democracies of capitalist countries:

If it is a capitalist country where bourgeois democratic rights prevail, the Party of the proletariat prepares the working class and its allies through open, legal struggles - parliamentary, trade union, general strikes, political agitation and such other activities, in order to organise a country-wide armed insurrection at an hour of revolutionary crisis, seizing power first in key

*cities and then extending it throughout the country, at the same time strengthens appropriate secret party apparatus and combines secret, illegal and semi-legal activities with open and legal activities in accordance with concrete conditions.*²⁴

This analysis is a synthesis of the correct ideas from Mao's remarks on revolutionary strategy in capitalist and imperialist countries. They reflect a Maoist line on revolutionary strategy. Through understanding the dialectical relationship between legal and illegal work, and secret and open work the party of the proletariat can be built, the level of consciousness of the masses can be developed, preparations for a nation-wide insurrection can be made, and the development of a revolutionary situation can be hastened. This work must be pursued in accordance with the particular situation in a given capitalist country.

In the present particular situation in the U.S. there is not a basis to do parliamentary or electoral work. The elaborate rituals of elections on a local and national level serve an important part in maintaining the illusion that the U.S. electoral system provides "democracy for all." In actuality, it maintains democracy for the bourgeoisie and dictatorship over the masses. The myth of American democracy must be dispelled on a mass level. The growth of revolutionary organization built among the masses in ongoing struggles is the primary way that this will be accomplished. The system, and associated opportunist political trends, use participation in the state's elections to sidetrack the masses from this task. These forces see elections as a strategy for people's victory. In reality this is a strategy of revisionism and opportunism. During large-scale political openings in the future, it is possible selective electoral activity could be a secondary tactic for exposing the bankruptcy of the system and the state. However, given the lack of mass revolutionary developments and mass struggles at present, this does not make sense in our context, even as a tactic.²⁵ At present, there is a basis for legal, non-electoral, forms of struggle that can

23 From "A Proposal Concerning the General Line of the International Communist Movement", a letter written by the Central Committee of the CPC to the Central Committee of the CPSU in 1963. Available online here: <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/sino-soviet-split/cpc/proposal.htm>

24 Central Committee (P) CPI(Maoist), *Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution* (2004), p. 37. Available online here: <http://bannedthought.net/India/CPI-Maoist-Docs/Founding/StrategyTactics-pamphlet.pdf>

25 The Communist understanding of parliamentary work is itself often distorted by opportunists and dismissed outright by adventurists. This is particularly true in the wake of Khrushchevite revisionism and earlier mistakes made by Stalin that laid the basis for this deviation. Lenin offers analysis of how and when it makes sense for a communist party to engage in parliamentary struggles in "*Left-Wing*" *Communism: An Infantile Disorder*. Of particular importance is that this tactic, pursued by a party with an all-country perspective, cannot be oriented

be pursued in the course of various workplace, housing, and oppressed nationality struggles.

The South Western Regional Bureau of CPI (Maoist) further elaborates on the relation between legal and illegal work in the 2009 *Leadership Training Programme*:

*the party organization should be secret, the more secret the better. Whereas, a mass organization should be open, the wider, the better.*²⁶

and

*Often we interpret the phrase “utilizing legal opportunities” to mean “function legally until it is too late to function at all”. Communists must have foresight and not act blindly. We know the enemy will clamp down so we must prepare for that when in fact there are legal opportunities. Utilizing “legal opportunities” means precisely this; build the movement in a big way taking the bulk of the new cadres to the underground. It also means maintaining both the legal and also the underground network of the mass organizations, so that when the legal is smashed the underground can continue to function.*²⁷

This analysis highlights the importance of having open and legal work done in mass organizations in dialectical relation to secret and illegal work in cadre organizations. This helps to clarify the importance of open and legal work in revolutionary organizing. CPI (Maoist)’s analysis emphasizes the need to seize the opportunities which exist to build above-ground organizations, and the related necessity for secret methods and underground work so that the state’s efforts to destroy open and legal work cannot destroy the revolutionary movement.

The clarity of CPI Maoist’s analysis of the global situation and the Indian situation, in these and other texts, serve as important examples of creative application of MLM in the contemporary period. In our view revolutionaries today should look to material like this to guide their theory and practice, and not waste time on the re-

visionist material and individuals that we criticize in this document, except as a negative example.

The Struggle against the Dogmatists

As we mentioned in the introduction, much of the confusion on the question of the universality of PPW relates to Mao’s struggle against the dogmatists in the CCP. These dogmatists (also referred to as the 28 ½ Bolsheviks) were trained in Moscow, and used this to claim that they had superior theoretical knowledge of the way forward for the revolution in China. In particular, they advocated a mechanical application of the October Road to the concrete conditions of China, claiming that the strategy of the October Revolution was correct and universal.

While the October Revolution was certainly correct, and has many universal lessons for revolutionaries, the 28½ Bolsheviks incorrectly assumed that this meant that the strategy pursued in Russia was the only correct strategy for revolution. In *On Contradiction*, Mao polemicized against these dogmatists, stating:

*The principle of using different methods to resolve different contradictions is one which Marxist-Leninists must strictly observe. The dogmatists do not observe this principle; they do not understand that conditions differ in different kinds of revolution and so do not understand that different methods should be used to resolve different contradictions; on the contrary, they invariably adopt what they imagine to be an unalterable formula and arbitrarily apply it everywhere, which only causes setbacks to the revolution or makes a sorry mess of what was originally well done.*²⁸

Those who advocate for the universality of PPW today, our contemporary dogmatists, make the same mistakes as the dogmatists of Mao’s time. They imagine one revolutionary strategy “to be an unalterable formula and arbitrarily apply it everywhere.” The fact that the contemporary dogmatists proclaim that PPW is universal and those of Mao’s time proclaimed the universality of the October Road, is of little consequence. Both refuse to

towards winning seats in government, but rather in exposing to the broad masses the inadequacy and inability of bourgeois democracy to serve their interests. Of course, such work can only be pursued in certain situations as a tactic and can by no means become the strategy of a revolutionary party or its primary means of struggle.

26 South Western Regional Bureau of the CPI (Maoist), *Leadership Training Programme* (2009), p. 21. This document is cited in Jan Myrdal’s *Red Star Over India* on pages 114-116.

27 Ibid, pp. 84-86.

28 Mao, *On Contradiction*, MZSW, vol. 1, p. 311-347. Available online here: https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1_17.htm

grapple with the particularity of their situation, and this can only lead to setbacks for the revolution. Those who are unable to transform a petty-bourgeois orientation often are disposed to defer to supposed masters and correct-

ness, fearing association with “the students in the back of the classroom.” In the United States, this problem is particularly acute. We must struggle against such liberalism, and put politics in command.

2. Origins of This Mistaken Idea

WHILE, IN THE LAST INSTANCE, the dogmatic tendencies of those who advocate the universality of PPW are rooted in bourgeois ideology, we believe it is important to trace the origin and development of this idea in the MLM movement. At present there are a number of different trends, groups, and individuals which proclaim the universality of PPW; we will discuss a few of these in detail, and break down the mistaken assumptions on which their conclusions rest. Our hope is that through this analysis we can clarify the dangers of this dogmatic trend and its abortive ultra-“left” essence.

Gonzalo and the PCP on PPW

Many proponents of the universality of PPW refer to Gonzalo (Abimael Guzmán)—the former chairman of the Communist Party of Peru (PCP)—as the one who first synthesized or formulated this idea. In a 1988 interview with *El Diario*, Gonzalo stated: “The problem of revolutionary violence is how to actually carry it out with people’s war. The way we see this question is that when Chairman Mao Tsetung established the theory of people’s war and put it into practice, he provided the proletariat with its military line, with a military theory and practice that is universally valid and therefore applicable everywhere in accordance with the concrete conditions.”²⁹

Gonzalo claims that the theory of PPW is actually a new and universal advancement of the “military line” of the proletariat which was developed by Mao. While he does qualify this statement by stating that PPW must be applied “in accordance with the concrete conditions” of the particular situation, this articulation does not account for the fact that, according to Mao, PPW was only possible in China because of the semi-feudal, semi-colonial, semi-capitalist conditions.

The theory of the universality of PPW can also be found in the PCP’s 1988 Fundamental Documents; however, these documents offer little in the way of clarifica-

tion or explanation:

A key and decisive question is the understanding of the universal validity of people’s war and its subsequent application taking into account the different types of revolution and the specific conditions of each revolution. To clarify this key issue it is important to consider that no insurrection like that of Petrograd, the anti-fascist resistance, or the European guerrilla movements in the Second World War have been repeated, as well as considering the armed struggles that are presently being waged in Europe. In the final analysis, the October Revolution was not only an insurrection but a revolutionary war that lasted for several years. Consequently, in the imperialist countries the revolution can only be conceived as a revolutionary war which today is simply people’s war.³⁰

Either the October Road was a distinct strategy for revolution, qualitatively different from the strategy of PPW, or it was a particular form of PPW, but it cannot be both. And yet, the PCP equivocates—before ultimately concluding that the October Revolution was actually PPW because it was “not only an insurrection but a revolutionary war that lasted for several years.” By this logic, PPW is simply reduced to a communist-led war. This reduction negates the concrete content of PPW as formulated by Mao, and replaces it with an abstract generality. This is a trend at the heart of dogmatism: replacing concrete content with abstract formulas.

If PPW is reducible to this abstract generality, how can the PCP also claim that “it is with Chairman Mao that the proletariat attains its military theory”? If PPW is a general term applicable to any revolutionary war, what then was Mao’s contribution to this theory? How can it be that Mao developed “a military theory and practice that is universally valid” when this was already practiced by the Bolsheviks? This is a basic contradiction in the PCP’s articulation which is not resolved. In our

29 See http://cw.routledge.com/textbooks/dawson/data/Interview_with_Chairman_Gonzalo.pdf

30 PCP, *Fundamental Documents* (1988). Available online in Spanish, here: http://www.solrojo.org/pcp_doc/pcp_gd88.htm

view, the revolution and civil war in Russia employed a fundamentally different strategy than the PPW in China. Mao's theory of surrounding the cities from the countryside, of building up red base areas in locations where white power is weakest, and of fighting a guerrilla war which leads to a war of maneuver and then a war of position, are all distinct from what occurred in Russia, where years of revolutionary organizing put the Bolsheviks in a position where they were able to seize state power by leading insurrections in two cities, followed by years of civil war to hold on to this power.

What's more, the revolutionary struggles in Russia cannot simply be reduced to the insurrections in October 1917 and the subsequent civil war. There was a methodical strategy for growing the party, raising the level of conscious struggle among the masses, and preparing for revolution which dates back until at least 1901. Through concrete study of the dynamics at play in this period, we can understand and appreciate the specificity of the Russian Revolution that *is in no way reducible to a particular application of the same revolutionary strategy* that was used in China.

For example, most of the organizing in Russia occurred in non-revolutionary situations. This does not mean that the organizing was not important, but rather that it did not involve open military conflict with the state, except for during the 1905 Revolution and the revolutions in 1917. In contrast, with the launching of the PPW in China in 1927, Mao and others were able to sustain and grow a localized revolutionary situation in the countryside all the way up to national liberation in 1949. Similarly in India, comrades have sustained and grown localized revolutionary situations for the last 50 years.

Understanding the qualitative differences between imperialist and oppressed countries allows us to formulate a correct revolutionary strategy suitable to the specifics of the situation in question. Against the PCP's claim, this is not a question of the application of the same general strategy to different particular circumstances, but rather the application of qualitatively different strategies

which history has shown are applicable to different particular national conditions.

So why then does the PCP insist on the universal applicability of PPW? In our view there are two principal reasons, the first is *jefatura* and the second is the belief that Mao wrote *Long Live the Victory of People's War!* which was actually written by Lin Biao. The former was a line in the PCP which held that Gonzalo was the source of correct ideas. We cannot address all aspects this deviation in this paper,³¹ but one example should suffice to clarify this point:

*[Gonzalo] departs from Chairman Mao's thesis that the task of strategy as a science is to study the laws of leading military operations that influence the situation of the war in its entirety [...] Taking up Stalin, he links strategy with tactics and establishes the strategic-operational Plans that are the concrete way that strategy is linked to tactical operations. As a result, each Committee must elaborate its strategic-operational plans within the strategic-operational Plan common to the entire Party. The correct disposition emanates from the just decision of the commander.*³²

Here the PCP claims that through correct leadership one can overcome the objective contradiction between strategy and tactics. While this contradiction can certainly be handled correctly or incorrectly, to claim that correct leadership is able to overcome this contradiction is subjective-idealism. A correct line does not negate the existence of an objective contradiction, rather it works out a means by which to resolve this and other contradictions. In practice, *jefatura* leads to a commandist approach to politics that stifles the creativity of the masses in the name of following the line set out by leadership. In this regard, it is not surprising that the PCP claims that Gonzalo "departs from Mao" and "takes up Stalin." Under this approach to politics, which was most expressed in the cult of personality under Stalin, the masses are not free to criticize incorrect ideas from the center, and the contradiction between democracy and centralism is handled in a manner that, if left unchecked, will sow the seeds for revi-

31 For more on this c.f. Ajith's "Against Avakianism," *Naxalbari*, No. 4. in which he states "The PCP was using the formulation 'Guiding Thought of the party' even before the people's war was initiated. Gonzalo played a great role in fighting against revisionism, reorganizing the party and charting out the specific line and plans of people's war. But how can a party claim that a 'Thought' has emerged even before its line is put to the test of practice and verified? This contradicts the Marxist theory of knowledge and promotes some sort of idealism. The Avakianist's insistence that the development of ideology does not need the verification of practice is another example." p. 77. Available online here: <http://www.bannedthought.net/India/CPI-ML-Naxalbari/Naxalbari-Magazine/Naxalbari-04.pdf>

32 PCP, *Bases of Discussion of General Political Line: Military Line* (1988). Available in Spanish online here: http://www.solrojo.org/pcp_doc/pcp_lpg.mi.htm

sionism and the defeat of the revolution.³³ This happened to a degree in Peru, where, after the capture of Gonzalo and the majority of the central committee of the PCP, comrades in the party were unable for a period of time to formulate a line for continuing revolutionary struggle.

The second reason that the PCP insists on the universality of PPW as a strategy, and why Gonzalo speaks of “a worldwide people’s war” in his 1988 interview with *El Diario*,³⁴ is due to confusion over the authorship of the document *Long Live the Victory of People’s War!* This document was written in 1965 by Lin Biao, and in it he claims:

Taking the entire globe, if North America and Western Europe can be called “the cities of the world”, then Asia, Africa and Latin America constitute “the rural areas of the world”. Since World War II, the proletarian revolutionary movement has for various reasons been temporarily held back in the North American and West European capitalist countries, while the people’s revolutionary movement in Asia, Africa and Latin America has been growing vigorously. In a sense, the contemporary world revolution also presents a picture of the encirclement of cities by the rural ar-

*eas.*³⁵

In the PCP’s 1988 *Fundamental Document* they mistakenly attribute the authorship of *Long Live the Victory of People’s War!* to Mao.³⁶ This confusion, in conjunction with their view of the absolute correctness of leadership, led them to conclude that PPW was a universal strategy for revolution, and could be carried out the whole world over, and coordinated into a “worldwide people’s war.” Instead of seeing the need to establish socialism in one country, continue class struggle through many cultural revolutions, and promote a revolutionary foreign policy, the PCP ultimately put forward a metaphysical line of “worldwide people’s war” which has a distinct similarity to Trotsky’s concept of Permanent Revolution.³⁷ While PPW was a correct strategy for the situation in Peru, it was incorrect to conclude that PPW is a universal strategy for revolution. It was also incorrect to conclude from this that a worldwide people’s war was possible.

This theory was also based on the belief that, at least from 1980 onward, the world was entering “the strategic offensive of world revolution.” The PCP claimed that “In the next 50 to 100 years, the domination of im-

33 c.f. Mao’s comments on this matter: “However, over a long period of time, [Stalin] did develop metaphysics and damage dialectics. The personality cult was metaphysics; no one was permitted to criticize him. As I see it, the forty years of the Soviet Union are a dialectical process [in themselves]. There were Lenin’s dialectics, [and then with] Stalin there were many metaphysical viewpoints.” From *Speech at the Congress of Communist Parties and Workers’ Parties in Socialist Countries* (Nov. 18, 1957), *The Writings of Mao Zedong*, p. 792, cited in Single Spark Collective’s “Mao’s Evaluation of Stalin”: <http://www.massline.org/SingleSpark/Stalin/StalinMaoEval.htm>

34 See http://cw.routledge.com/textbooks/dawson/data/Interview_with_Chairman_Gonzalo.pdf

35 Lin Biao, *Long Live the Victory of the People’s War!* (1965). Available online here: https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/lin-biao/1965/09/peoples_war/index.htm

36 PCP, *Fundamental Documents*.

37 See Gonzalo’s remarks in his 1988 interview in *El Diario* in which he equates socialism with PPW and advocates for linking PPW’s worldwide:

“With regard to scientific socialism, it is enough to point to people’s war, since it is with Chairman Mao Tsetung that the international proletariat has attained a fully developed military theory, giving us then the military theory of our class, the proletariat, applicable everywhere.”

and:

“We conceive of it as unfolding in the future, and related to the 50 to 100 years that Chairman Mao Tsetung predicted. We see it as great waves of people’s war, until finally all of them converge like the legions of steel of a great worldwide red army, as Lenin himself said. This is how we see it. We think this is the only road to follow. The problem, I insist, is that there is a risk of world war and it would be a huge massacre, from which could only come misery, injustice, pain and death, and more reasons to put an end to them. The only solution, therefore, is people’s war, which, conceived of in waves, will lead to a worldwide people’s war and the coming together of the legions of steel of the international proletariat, of the people, who in the end will carry out our historic mission. We have the great fortune to live in these decades in which imperialism and reaction will be swept away, because what Chairman Mao foresaw will be attained. If we do not see it ourselves, others who follow us will, because the legions are increasing more and more.

What is the problem? What is the key? To place Marxism-Leninism-Maoism in command. And with Maoism principally, take up people’s war, which is universally applicable, taking into account the character of each revolution and the specific conditions of each country.”

Some adventurist groups in Europe put forward similar Trotskyist theses. For example the group Revolutionärer Aufbau BRD of Germany recently published a declaration “People’s War Until Communism!” <http://www.demvolkediennen.org/index.php/en/europa/1807-people-s-war-until-communism>

perialism and all exploiters will be swept away,” which was based on their view that “History cannot go backwards.”³⁸ This mechanical conception of history moving in a linear fashion led them to conclude that world revolutionary struggles were at a high tide, when, objectively, the year 1980 was a low-point in world revolutionary struggles. Recent years had seen, among other events, the 1976 counter-revolution in China, the further consolidation of the Vietnamese communists to the Soviet-revisionist line, the objective and subjective weakness in India following the setbacks in 1972, and the Communist Party of the Philippines courting of the Soviet revisionists.

All of this shows that the PCP’s claim that PPW is universal was based on an abstract generalization, a subjective-idealist view of leadership, and an incorrect view of the international situation. It is more in line with Lin Biao’s thought than Maoism. These issues were not always dominant in the PCP, and they waged a successful revolutionary struggle for over a decade. However, due to their failure to address these and other deviations they eventually faced major setbacks. In order to avoid repeating their mistakes, it is necessary to take a dialectical materialist approach in evaluating their successes and failures. Such an overall evaluation is beyond the scope of this paper, but our hope is that this critical assessment of the PCP’s claims of the universality of PPW can contribute to a larger evaluation by the ICM.

PCR-RCP on PPW and Armed Revisionists in Europe

The Revolutionary Communist Party of Canada (PCR-RCP) has stated many times that Protracted People’s War is a universal strategy for revolution which applies in all countries, including powerful imperialist countries like the U.S. and Canada.³⁹ Their arguments about PPW are worth analyzing because they rely on incorrect evaluations of our present situation, the October Revolution, Mao’s writings on PPW, and the nature of revisionism. These arguments amount to a dismissal of the importance of concrete analysis of concrete conditions, a complete rewriting of Mao’s understanding of PPW, and a pet-

ty-bourgeois glorification of “left”-adventurism.

In analyzing the current situation, they conclude that there has been a qualitative shift in the nature of capitalist-imperialism and in the repressive capacity of imperialist states since the October Revolution:

As it matured, imperialism brought upon modern capitalist states new structures and purpose, among which are: legal state authority (repressive laws); covert support and procedures free from any hindrances; state apparatuses used for various purposes (secret services); state apparatuses given discretionary powers and means of support written in different bourgeois constitutions (secret funds, foreign secret service agencies); and finally paramilitary and organized police (security agencies, specialized antiterrorist groups). We can also add to this the shift, in about every imperialist country, the use of regular armed forces instead of mandatory military service. These transformations can be witnessed in most imperialist states.⁴⁰

The PCR-RCP tacitly acknowledges that both insurrection and PPW are revolutionary strategies which are suited to particular material conditions and that the October Revolution followed an insurrectionary strategy. However, in order to support their thesis that PPW is now a universal strategy for revolution, they have to posit that a qualitative transformation in the nature of imperialism and imperialist states took place in the last 100 years. The PCR-RCP classifies the October Revolution as a special case which is now antiquated, justifying this claim by saying that imperialism has developed to a higher stage than that of Lenin’s time. They cite a list of “new structures” in imperialist countries such as “organized police” and “legal state authority.” By means of this list, the PCR-RCP sets out to prove that the October Road is no longer a valid strategy for proletarian revolution in imperialist countries.

However, this list does not mean that the general strategy of the October Road—creatively applied to particular conditions—is no longer valid. This argument is particularly ridiculous because the majority of the “new structures” in the PCR-RCP’s list were actually already

38 PCP, *Somos los Iniciadores* (We are the Initiators) (1980). Available online in Spanish here: http://www.solrojo.org/pcp_doc/pcp_240880.htm

39 Their *Party Programme* has a section on PPW as their strategy for revolution in Canada: <http://www.pcr-rpc.ca/old/en/programme/10/>. A subsequent document entitled *More on the Question of Waging Revolutionary War in the Imperialist Countries* elaborates further on the point, available here: <http://www.pcr-rpc.ca/en/archives/1164>

40 PCR-RCP, *Protracted People’s War is the Only Way to Make Revolution*. Available online here: <http://www.pcr-rpc.ca/old/en/pwd/1e.php>

present and quite developed in Tsarist Russia! This environment presented unique challenges, but through principled organization and constant struggle against opportunism and “left”-adventurism, the Bolsheviks charted a course that culminated in the October Revolution in 1917.

Lenin discussed the realities of organizing under the regime in *What Is To Be Done?*⁴¹ He describes how entire study circles, who had simply begun to distribute leaflets at factories or talk to workers, were often arrested and imprisoned by the tsarist police:

*The government, at first thrown into confusion and committing a number of blunders (e.g., its appeal to the public describing the misdeeds of the socialists, or the banishment of workers from the capitals to provincial industrial centres), very soon adapted itself to the new conditions of the struggle and managed to deploy well its perfectly equipped detachments of agents provocateurs, spies, and gendarmes. Raids became so frequent, affected such a vast number of people, and cleared out the local study circles so thoroughly that the masses of the workers lost literally all their leaders, the movement assumed an amazingly sporadic character, and it became utterly impossible to establish continuity and coherence in the work. The terrible dispersion of the local leaders; the fortuitous character of the study circle memberships; the lack of training in, and the narrow outlook on, theoretical, political, and organisational questions were all the inevitable result of the conditions described above. Things have reached such a pass that in several places the workers, because of our lack of self-restraint and the inability to maintain secrecy, begin to lose faith in the intellectuals and to avoid them; the intellectuals, they say, are much too careless and cause police raids!*⁴²

The PCR-RCP would have us believe that secret police and repressive laws only came about after the October Revolution, despite Lenin’s description of how “perfectly equipped detachments” of secret, political police broke up study circles and arrested local leaders. It is

of course true that over the last century most imperialist countries have expanded their repressive forces and domestic surveillance capabilities, but Lenin’s quote shows that the Bolsheviks also organized in a situation fraught with extreme state repression. These difficulties were overcome through principled organization, and in particular through the organization of a party of professional revolutionaries, and the adoption of secret methods of work when necessary. The PCR-RCP either is ignorant of the most basic aspects of the history of these struggles, or they willfully and purposefully ignore this history to support their adventurist line of urban guerrilla warfare—which they incorrectly call PPW. They effectively argue both that key difficulties that the Bolsheviks faced are new and unique to our situation, that the methods by which the Bolsheviks overcame them are outdated, and that we therefore need a new strategy. This is nonsense.

But let us take a step back from the PCR-RCP’s lack of familiarity with revolutionary history, and examine the reasoning behind their argument. The basic point is that imperialist states have advanced and strengthened their repressive forces since the time of Lenin, and therefore the revolutionary strategy pursued by the Bolsheviks is no longer feasible. They argue that instead we must pursue the strategy of PPW. But clearly, more powerful, mobile, and active repressive organizations actually make the practice of PPW *far more difficult*. How will it be possible to develop a base area when forces such as the national guard and state police can be deployed to a city in a matter of hours, as they were in Ferguson in 2014 and Baltimore in 2015?⁴³ To better understand the PCR-RCP’s answer to this question it is helpful to refer to their description of how PPW will occur in Canada.

In the PCR-RCP *Party Program* section on PPW they state that:

In countries oppressed by imperialism where the peasantry is still the main force to make revolution and where therefore, the heart of the revolutionary forces are to be found in the countryside (like in China, Peru, in India and the Philippines, just to name a

41 Vladimir Lenin, *What is to Be Done? Burning Questions of Our Movement* (New York: International Publishers, 2014). Available online here: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1901/witbd/>

42 Lenin, *What is to be Done?*, Chapter IV, “The Primitiveness of the Economists and the Organization of the Revolutionaries”

43 A news article about the national guard and police forces in Baltimore, which describes the strength, scale and speed of the response: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-police-baltimore/thousands-of-police-descend-on-baltimore-to-enforce-curfew-after-riots-idUSKBN0N1IN720150428>. In Ferguson a highly militarized police force was deployed, designed to terrify protesters with overwhelming force. This contemporary report provides some details: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2014/08/14/military-veterans-see-deeply-flawed-police-response-in-ferguson/?utm_term=.c92b14828f0c

few), protracted people's war consists of the encircling of the cities from the countryside. Revolutionaries establish base areas that put into practice new proletarian life-styles at their inception.

And

*In Canada, like in the other big imperialist countries, protracted people's war will mainly take place within the cities and urban areas. It is there that the nascent proletarian power will appear. The support and the participation of the masses, once again, are of the utmost importance in this process. The revolution will be built around a vast and underground network led by the party.*⁴⁴

From this it should be clear that what the PCR-RCP calls PPW has nothing to do with Mao's theorization of PPW. Mao's theory of PPW involves encircling the cities from the countryside, as they acknowledge. The "revolutionary" strategy that the PCR-RCP lays out for imperialist countries, in contrast, is actually little more than urban guerrilla warfare; in this regard it is similar to the strategy of European armed revisionist "left"-adventurist groups of the 70s and 80s.⁴⁵ Despite these groups' stated revolutionary aims, in reality they engaged in focoist campaigns of bombings, assassinations, and drug-trafficking which lead to massive crackdowns from state forces and left many of their cadre imprisoned or killed.

In this regard, it is not surprising that the PCR-RCP by and large upholds actions of the Red Brigades— at least until 1976—as a model for revolutionary strategy:

The practice of armed propaganda at the stage of gathering of strength, at least in regards to the experience of the Red Brigades in their ascending period (1970-1976), demonstrated that armed actions are at first mostly ideological and political tools (less importantly of a military character). Furthermore, if they are guided by correct theory, they allow to reinforce and accelerate the formation of the main nub for the power grab: the Communist Party. Armed propaganda

*has proven to be incremental for political revolutionary struggle and political propaganda. It is a means to permeate the proletariat with the communist project through an active struggle to defeat revisionism. Armed struggle also introduces revolutionary optimism by putting an end to the demoralization of the masses; by the same token, it is a strong educational tool to educate new generations of young proletarians to revolutionary struggle.*⁴⁶

The claim here is that armed propaganda and armed struggle are *the essential means* by which to rally the masses to the cause of revolution. The fantasy is that the guerrilla actions of a small group will inspire the masses to stop being so "demoralized" and instead show them the basis to take up arms. The PCR-RCP also reduces the struggle against revisionism to taking up arms, thus negating the possibility and the historical reality of armed revisionism. This view of revolution has much more in common with Che's revisionist theory of focoism than it does with Mao's theory of PPW. The PCR-RCP's view is that the primary obstacle to mass involvement in revolutionary struggle is "demoralization" rather than lack of conscious understanding of the need for revolution. This is in line with the Red Brigades' claim that:

*The problem is not transmitting communist consciousness to the multitudes, but demonstrating the necessity and possibility of the very existence of revolutionary politics; of the viability of the alternative plan for power, which immediately and directly confronts (independently of the objective conditions for revolution) the State.*⁴⁷

The PCR-RCP also includes and endorses the following quote from the Belgian Communist Combatant Cells (CCC) in their Party Program:

The role of communists is not to entertain the democratic functioning of bourgeois society, it is to prove the feasibility of the revolutionary path. This means to show the proletariat that it has the military capability to fight against the bourgeoisie and to be victorious in

44 From the section in the PCR-RCP's *Party Programme* titled "The path of revolution in Canada: Protracted People's War". Online here: <http://www.pcr-rpc.ca/old/en/programme/10/>

45 The Red Army Faction in Germany, Red Brigades in Italy, Communist Combatant Cells in Belgium, etc. For a good overview of and strong criticism of these groups (and a few others) see *The False Path of the W. European "Armed Guerrilla"*, published in *A World To Win* in 1985. Available online here: <http://www.bannedthought.net/International/RIM/AWTW/1985-4/AWTW-04-UrbanGuerrilla.pdf>

46 PCR-RCP, *Protracted People's War is the Only Way to Make Revolution*.

47 Found in: <http://www.bannedthought.net/International/RIM/AWTW/1985-4/AWTW-04-UrbanGuerrilla.pdf>

defeating it (even at a small level).⁴⁸

These quotes and the PCR-RCP's endorsement of them show a disregard for the task of working among the masses to raise their level of consciousness through struggle. Instead, subjective will and violent acts of a few guerrillas are seen as the "key link" that will inspire the masses to take up the gun and rally to the guerrillas. The PCR-RCP, much like the European Adventurists of the 70s and 80s, makes no mention of the correct handling of contradictions among the people, which was so essential to the success of the PPW in China. Instead, they assume that revolution is made simply by taking up the gun and showing others that they too can do this "independently of objective conditions for revolution." Compare this with Mao's 1968 discussion of the question of revolutionary strategy and its relation to the objective conditions at a given moment:

We have always maintained that a revolution cannot be made at will and is impossible unless a revolutionary situation objectively exists. But the outbreak and the victory of revolution depend not only on the existence of a revolutionary situation but also on the preparations and efforts made by the subjective revolutionary forces. It is "Left" adventurism if the party of the proletariat does not accurately appraise both the objective conditions and subjective forces making for revolution and if it rashly launches a revolution before the conditions are ripe. But it is Right opportunism, or revisionism, if the proletarian party makes no active preparations for revolution before the conditions are ripe, or dare not lead a revolution and seize state

*power when a revolutionary situation exists and the conditions are ripe.*⁴⁹

All of this shows that the PCR-RCP's strategy for PPW in Canada is little more than "left"-adventurism. Instead of basing their theory of PPW on Mao's writings on the subject or a study of the Chinese Revolution, they look to the armed-revisionists groups from Europe who carried out urban guerrilla warfare. This is not the first time in the ICM that this sort of line has been put forward. Bruce Franklin, a founding member of the Revolutionary Union (RU) and, at the time, a professor at Stanford University, advocated this line, and eventually split from the RU over these differences. He remains a professor to this day—now employed at Rutgers—and has never launched the guerrilla war.⁵⁰ Even before this, Lenin struggled against the Narodniks and their petty-bourgeois view of revolutionary struggle. Lenin's criticism of the terrorist/left-adventurist conception of "excitatory terror" in *What Is To Be Done?* is equally applicable to the PCR-RCP's strategy for revolution:

The admission that the government cannot now be 'terrified' and hence disrupted, by terror, is tantamount to a complete condemnation of terror as a system of struggle, as a sphere of activity sanctioned by the programme. Secondly, it is still more characteristic as an example of the failure to understand our immediate tasks in regard to 'education for revolutionary activity.' Svoboda advocates terror as a means of 'exciting' the working-class movement and of giving it a 'strong impetus.' It is difficult to imagine an argument that more thoroughly disproves itself. Are there

48 Quoted by the PCR-RCP in their Party Programme, in the section titled *The path of revolution in Canada: Protracted People's War*, available online here: <http://www.pcr-rcp.ca/old/en/programme/10/>. The quote is taken from *La Flèche et la Cible (The Arrow and the Target)*, a document written by imprisoned members of the CCC, available online here: <http://www.cellulescommunistescombattantes.be/fleche2.htm>. The original French: "le rôle des communistes n'est pas d'entretenir le fonctionnement démocratique bourgeois, il est d'apporter la preuve de viabilité de la voie révolutionnaire, et cela jusqu'au niveau militaire où ils doivent démontrer la possibilité d'affronter victorieusement (même à une échelle réduite), les armes à la main, la bourgeoisie et ses forces de défense."

49 The Editorial Departments of *Renmin Ribao (People's Daily)* and *Hongqi (Red Flag)* "The Proletarian Revolution and Khrushchev's Revisionism: Eighth Comment on the Open Letter of the Central Committee of the CPSU," March 31, 1964, *The Polemic on the General Line of the International Communist Movement* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1965), p 393.

50 C.f. The entry on Franklin's organization Venceremos in *The Dictionary of Revolutionary Marxism* (available at <http://www.massline.org/Dictionary/V.htm>):

"The very name 'Venceremos,' Spanish for 'We Will Win,' derives from a battle cry of Che Guevara. But the connection of this Venceremos organization to Che was much deeper than that. They were in essence proposing an urban guerrilla warfare version of his notorious foco strategy. However, Venceremos was much more talk than action, and it may not have actually undertaken any guerrilla actions. But it was consciously preparing to do so, acquiring arms and expertise in their use, and it definitely expected that armed struggle would not be long in coming. (This is a point that Franklin now seems to deny, according to the Wikipedia.) But their actual activity seems to have been more around reformist issues such as working for prison reform and defending war protesters.

"It seems fair to say that Venceremos was less of a Marxist group, and more of a student-based anarchist organization, which though known for its wild rhetoric and AK-47 logo, soon fell apart and disappeared."

not enough outrages committed in Russian life without special ‘excitants’ having to be invented? On the other hand, is it not obvious that those who are not, and cannot be, roused to excitement even by Russian tyranny will stand by ‘twiddling their thumbs’ and watch a handful of terrorists engaged in single combat with the government?’⁵¹

Lenin’s critique of the “left”-adventurists of his time still holds good today, and is equally applicable to the PCR-RCP and the European adventurists they uphold. The strategy of terrorism as an excitant, as something which inspires the proletariat to greater and more daring feats, was disproven by the Bolsheviks 100 years ago. It failed to “excite” the masses again in the 1970s, and it will continue to fail in the future. This is something which has been shown time and time again in the history of proletarian revolutionary struggles.

So why then does the PCR-RCP remain so confused? In our view it is due to their petty-bourgeois world-view and their failure to understand the danger of armed revisionism. This leads them to endorse armed-revisionists like the European adventurist groups. For example they state that:

The revolutionary experience of the 1970’s and 80’s in major imperialist cities clearly indicated that the combination of armed struggle with the mass struggle and the agitation and propaganda work of the Communist Party allowed to break [sic] with electoralism, parliamentarism and revisionism, when guided by correct theory.⁵²

The claim is that because groups like the RAF, the Belgian CCC, and Red Brigades did not engage in parliamentary politics, because they did not seek to get elected, they were not revisionist. However, while Khrushchev’s theory of “peaceful transition” was and remains a form of revisionism, it is not the only one. Both the PCR-RCP and the “left”-adventurist groups in Europe failed to account for this reality. For example, the RAF endorsed the Soviet Social-Imperialists (including supporting the deployment of the Cuban army in Angola), and the Red Brigades—while nominally opposed to Soviet Social-Imperialism—in practice repeatedly opposed denouncing Brezhnev’s armed revisionism, on the justification that to do so would be “opportunist in deed.” Instead, they

viewed the “primary task of true communists” as “exploiting all the contradictions of imperialism.” This amounted to supporting the imperialist wars of the USSR on the grounds that they were less bad than the U.S. Deng Xiaoping used this same logic—albeit in inverted form—to justify his support for U.S. imperialism on the grounds that the USSR was the principal enemy of the people of the world. This logic was also practiced by the revisionists of the Second International to justify support for their own countries’ war efforts in WWI. Thus we can see how a failure to grapple with the existence and danger of armed revisionism leads directly to social-chauvinism.

From this, it should be clear that the PCR-RCP’s “new synthesis” of revolutionary strategy is nothing new at all, but rather something as old as Marxism itself: the petty-bourgeois politics of “left”-adventurism. It is on this foundation—and on a surface level analysis of the present situation, the October Revolution, and the Chinese Revolution—that the PCR-RCP’s theory of the “universality of PPW” is based. This amounts to a negation of the principles of MLM and of the need for concrete analysis of concrete situations. These errors will lead to setbacks unless corrected.

JMP and the Claim the October Road was PPW

Joshua Moufawad-Paul (JMP) has discussed PPW several times on his blog *MLM-Mayhem*. His articulation is fairly similar to that of the PCR-RCP. However, there are a few significant differences and because of these we want to discuss the specifics of JMP’s formulation. While the PCR-RCP’s take on PPW reflects a fundamentally petty-bourgeois glorification of left-adventurism, JMP seems to be caught between the Montreal faction of the PCR-RCP, various right-opportunist elements in the Party from elsewhere in Canada, and his own position as a member of the academy. In his attempts to appease these contradictory forces and “hold it all together,” JMP puts forward a variety of absurd and inconsistent positions. These include the claim that PPW is something other than the concrete form of revolutionary war developed in China, and that the October revolution was PPW. Sifting through JMP’s infantile, obscurantist, and self-aggrandizing academic writing style to discern what he is actually

51 Lenin, *What is to be Done?*, Chapter III, “Trade-Unionist Politics and Social-Democratic Politics”

52 PCR-RCP, *Protracted People’s War is the Only Way to Make Revolution*.

saying is a painful exercise. But by doing so we can clarify that his politics are little more than a base petty-bourgeois eclecticism embellished with academic airs.

In *On Protracted Peoples War as a Universal Development of Revolutionary Theory* JMP says that PPW is neither the concrete strategy developed by Mao nor a “left”-adventurist strategy of urban guerrilla warfare.⁵³ Instead, he says it must be thought of as a “protracted process.” To anyone who knows anything about revolutionary history the idea that revolutions proceed by “protracted processes” is such an obvious and commonplace fact that it hardly needs to be stated. No revolution is instantaneous. There is a need to build political power and struggle against the forces of reaction over a period of time, and only in petty-bourgeois anarchist fantasies do the masses spontaneously take to the streets and overthrow the ruling class on a whim.

Despite this, JMP has worked to dress up this simple fact that “things take time” as a revelation, and argued that, from this, PPW is universal. JMP’s position fundamentally negates Mao’s contributions by negating the concrete content of PPW, falsely opposes the insurrectionary strategy to “protracted processes,” falsely opposes legal struggle to PPW, and falsely claims that PPW in an imperialist country is not “left”-adventurism.

We will begin with JMP’s claim that PPW is something other than the revolutionary path developed by Mao and others in China:

*The most ludicrous dismissals are the claims that PPW is about forming peasant armies and surrounding the cities from the countryside amidst some sort of agrarian revolution... and since all talk of a powerful “peasant class” in this context is obviously non-sensical, then if this is what we believe we can be dismissed as delusional. Except this is not what we mean.*⁵⁴

What JMP is saying is that the particularity of the Chinese revolution does not matter. Nor do the experiences of the other ongoing and historical examples of PPW matter. All that matters in his view is the “universal” content of PPW which is supposedly applicable regardless of objective conditions. But as Maoists—and not dogma-

tists—we should be clear: PPW refers to the form of revolutionary war which was developed and fought in China and is being fought in India and the Philippines today. Instead of investigating the particularity of the present situation in Canada and developing a revolutionary strategy suitable to those conditions, and instead of investigating the particularities of how PPW has played out in the past or is playing out at present, JMP just dogmatically insists that it is a universal strategy because revolutions are “protracted.” This sort of empty abstract analysis may suffice for academic papers and PhD dissertations, but MLM demands that we avoid such posturing and instead engage in concrete analysis.

Revolutions certainly do not happen overnight. They take time and planning, and patient work among the masses. This should be evident to anyone who has even the slightest familiarity with revolutionary history, but this simple and obvious reality does not tell us much beyond the fact that people will not riot in the streets and create revolution tomorrow. It definitely does not mean that PPW is the only valid revolutionary strategy. Revolutionary strategy depends on the dialectical relation between the particularities of a given national situation and the universal lessons of past revolutions. In order to understand the strategies used in the past we must investigate their particularity so as to draw universal lessons from their successes and failures.

But all this is too much for JMP. He would rather dismiss any and all who disagree with his theory of the universality of PPW as solely advocating legal struggles:

*Those who argue that PPW does not apply to the centres of capitalism claim that the moment of insurrection must come after a protracted legal struggle. Work in reformist ways only, embed yourself in unions, engage in propaganda to win the hearts and minds of the people.*⁵⁵

This is a classic straw-man argument. JMP tries to portray those who oppose PPW in imperialist countries as the advocates of revisionist legalism; in doing so he frames the question as a simple binary opposition where a dialectical approach is needed.⁵⁶ In contrast to

53 JMP, *On Protracted Peoples War as a Universal Development of Revolutionary Theory*, Available online here: <https://moufawad-paul.blogspot.fr/2012/02/on-protracted-peoples-war-as-universal.html>

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid.

56 Metaphysics sees things as separate and isolated. This is apparent in JMP’s efforts to contrast open and legal struggles with revolution-

JMP's simplistic understanding, building for an insurrection in a country like the U.S. is going to require a long period of legal and illegal work. It is not something which we can prepare for by simply engaging in unions, passing out propaganda, or fighting for small reforms. However, it also cannot be done solely by engaging in illegal, clandestine organizing and in street fights with the police and fascists.⁵⁷ This basic dialectical point, about the need to relate legal and illegal struggles in any revolutionary strategy, is something JMP fails to grasp. This is evident in his dismissal of an insurrectionary strategy on the grounds that all the work done up to the point of insurrection would be of a purely legal nature. However, as Maoists, we must work to link mass-struggles for short-term gains—better working conditions, protection from abusive supervisors, fights against evictions, struggles against police brutality, opposition to imperialist wars, etc.—to the longer-term goals of revolution and communism.⁵⁸ And, as anyone with a basic familiarity with bourgeois legality knows, organizing for revolution is illegal. But, instead of dealing with the difficult questions involved in Maoist organizing to link the short and long-term interests of the masses, JMP avoids these questions entirely, repeating again and again the maxim that PPW is the answer. This is metaphysics.

In order to dismiss claims that the strategy of PPW in imperialist countries is little more than “left”-adventurism and urban guerrilla warfare, JMP states:

Then there are the equally wrong-headed charges that those of us who endorse PPW as a universal development of revolutionary theory are “adventurists” who want to start urban guerrilla squads tomorrow and begin shooting it out with the pigs. We are suddenly accused of being theoretically in line with the Red Army Faction or the Red Brigades. And though we uphold the legacy of these failed focoist attempts (just

*as we uphold every legacy of failed revolutionary attempts) this is also not what we mean.*⁵⁹

We should be clear that initiating guerrilla warfare in an imperialist country *during a non-revolutionary situation*—regardless if one starts tomorrow or five years from now—will lead to disaster. Even prior to launching an adventurist campaign of guerrilla warfare, these theoretical formulations can and do have a negative impact on the revolutionary movement in various countries. As we have mentioned, Bruce Franklin has yet to start the guerrilla war he advocated in the early 1970s. Nonetheless his ideological assaults on the revolutionary movement in the U.S. through a similar line did take a toll—it drew people away from revolutionary politics.

JMP also claims that he and others who advocate the universality of PPW are being falsely and unjustly compared to the Red Army Faction and Red Brigades. And yet, in JMP's article he repeatedly makes reference to the PCR-RCP's documents as the authoritative source on the theory of PPW in imperialist countries. And, as we discussed above, it is precisely in these document that the PCR-RCP references the Red Brigades and the politically similar Belgian CCC as positive examples which supposedly prove the viability of armed propaganda and urban guerrilla warfare in imperialist countries. Therefore it is entirely justified for people to criticize JMP—as well as the PCR-RCP, and others who reference their documents to support the theory that PPW is universal—for theoretical similarities to armed revisionist groups like the Red Brigades.

This is more broadly related to JMP's claim that he and others “uphold the legacy” of failed revolutionary attempts. But what does it mean to uphold the legacy of armed revisionists? The reality is that JMP, the PCR-RCP, and others in their orbit often blur the lines between armed revisionism and Maoist politics. We ex-

ary work. From this it would follow that revolutionary work is illegal. However, this is metaphysics and relies on a non-dialectical worldview. Open and legal work must be dialectically related to secret and illegal work in any revolutionary effort. The two should be interrelated. We discuss this above in our analysis of CPI (Maoist)'s views on revolutionary strategy in capitalist countries.

57 What's more, as the historic and ongoing PPW's show, PPW also requires a mix of legal and illegal work. CPI (Maoist) puts it well: “We have to complete Social investigation in all the States/Special Areas/Special Zones and study the forms of exploitation in the agricultural, industrial and service sectors by the International Financial Capital, Comprador Bureaucratic Capital and Feudalism together. We have to mobilise the broad masses against this in the class struggle. For this purpose we have to form legal, cover and UF forums to mobilise the vast masses in class struggle. We have to consolidate class organisations in all the Guerilla Zones and concentrate on intensification of class struggle starting from the local level.” *People's War*, Vol. 11, p. 132.

58 In Chapter 4 of the *Manifesto* Marx and Engels write: “The Communists fight for the attainment of the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the momentary interests of the working class; but in the movement of the present, they also represent and take care of the future of that movement.” Online here: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch04.htm>

59 JMP, *On Protracted Peoples War as a Universal Development of Revolutionary Theory*.

plained above how the PCR-RCP reduces revisionism to the Khrushchevite theory of “peaceful transition to communism,” and JMP here advocates a similar approach by uncritically “upholding” the legacy of armed revisionism.⁶⁰

In order to justify this “one size fits all” approach to politics, and the idea that PPW is universal JMP claims that the October Revolution was a form of PPW, albeit one that was “untheorized”:

The theory of Protracted Peoples War is juxtaposed with the theory of Insurrection that takes the moment of the 1917 October Revolution in Russia as more significant than the process from 1905-1917. As was argued in the articles cited above, all attempts to follow the October Road—-attempts that failed to grasp the moment of insurrection as only part of a much larger process of PPW—-have actually failed. Every attempted insurrection based on the strategy of Insurrection has been crushed despite all arguments that this strategy is the only viable revolutionary method at the centres of capitalism. There is no historical precedent aside from the October Revolution which, as I have already argued, was actually a protracted process.⁶¹

Here JMP once again negates the concrete content of PPW, saying little of what it entails other than repeating his mantra about the “protracted process,” and thereby claiming that the October Revolution was the culmination of a PPW. In doing so, he once again relies on a straw-man argument, namely the claim that anyone who discusses the October Revolution as an insurrection fails to appreciate the struggles from 1905-1917. Perhaps JMP has come to this conclusion from wasting so much time debating fellow academics and Trotskyists. The alternative is that he is being deliberately dishonest and deceptive. Either way, his argument holds little water. Even a basic familiarity with Lenin’s writing demonstrates the importance of the years of struggle that were required for the Bolsheviks to be in a position to seize state power in 1917. There are some people who talk about the Bolshevik Revolution but who haven’t bothered to read Lenin or don’t appreciate what he is saying, but the same cannot be

said of any serious revolutionary Maoist.

But JMP is not just saying that people don’t appreciate the Bolshevik’s organizing efforts prior to 1917. He is also claiming that it is only through understanding these efforts as PPW that we can succeed at revolution in an imperialist country. This is laughable, and JMP provides no arguments or evidence to support the claim that the 1905-1917 was PPW beyond the fact that it was “a protracted process.” But everything from writing a book to organizing for a strike is a “protracted process” and we hope that JMP would not have the audacity to claim that these are also forms of PPW!

What’s more, the Bolsheviks were not engaged in armed struggle for the vast majority of the period from 1905-1917. They were, however, engaged in very active work to fuse with the working class, to provide leadership to workers’ struggles, to support all progressive and democratic struggles in Russian society. In short, they were working to act as what Lenin called the “Tribune of the People.”⁶² However, they simply were not engaged in warfare during the entirety of this time, and it is ridiculous to say that they were. JMP again seeks to reduce difficult questions to binary oppositions: either the ridiculous theory that the insurrection in 1917 dropped out of thin air or the equally ridiculous theory that the October Revolution was PPW. Despite JMP’s support for the latter, neither of these theories represent an MLM analysis of the Bolshevik Revolution.

The obvious fact that the Bolsheviks were prepared to take state power in 1917 because of the many struggles through which they had already passed doesn’t in any way support the idea that they were fighting a People’s War. If PPW has no concrete content other than being a revolutionary strategy which happens through a “protracted process” then literally every revolution ever should be understood as PPW. In this case, universality is reduced to an abstract generality devoid of all particular content; this is the dogmatic view of universality.

While JMP is perfectly fine with such dogmatism, it does present him with a few problems: If PPW is just an abstract generality which is applicable to all successful

60 JMP further elaborates on this view in his document *The Spectre of “Ultra-leftism”* (available here: <https://moufawad-paul.blogspot.fr/2013/05/the-spectre-of-ultra-leftism.html>), in which he blurs not only blurs the lines between “left”-adventurism and revolutionary politics, but also between armed revisionists like Che, and genuine revolutionaries who made adventurist mistakes like Rosa Luxemburg. This sort of sophistry is a negation of the necessary revolutionary task of investigating past revolutionaries and their correct and incorrect ideas.

61 JMP, *On Protracted Peoples War as a Universal Development of Revolutionary Theory*.

62 Lenin, *What is To Be Done?*, Chapter III, “Trade-Unionist Politics And Social-Democratic Politics”

revolutions ever, then why harp on about it? And doesn't this claim negate the contribution of Mao and the CCP to revolutionary theory and practice? But JMP is aware, at least in some sense, that he would be revealed as the petty-bourgeois philistine that he is if he totally disregarded the contributions of Mao and others to revolutionary theory and practice.

To avoid such an unmasking, JMP says the following when discussing Liebknecht's writings on military matters:

*Still, these are just glimmers of a strategy that would not be theorized, despite being practiced without clear theoretical reflection from 1905-1917 in Russia, until Mao's theoretical conceptualization of PPW.*⁶³

Yes, JMP is really saying that the Bolshevik party practiced a revolutionary strategy, and successfully took state power, without having any clear idea what they were doing. According to JMP the revolutionary strategy employed by the Bolsheviks was not theoretically understood until Mao wrote about PPW many years later. Never mind that Mao's writings on PPW in China focus on the particularities of the Chinese Revolution, and make no claim to be a synthesis of the strategy of the Bolsheviks. Never mind that Mao's struggle against the dogmatists was against those who claimed that the strategy pursued by the Bolsheviks should also be pursued by the CCP. Never mind that JMP's claim is a negation of Mao's writings on the dialectical materialist theory of knowledge. JMP would have us believe that anyone who brings up such difficult questions doesn't appreciate the fact that revolution is a "protracted process!"

While such ham-handed dismissals may be par for the course in university conferences and in online forums, they do not suffice in the domain of revolutionary theory. In discussing the dialectical materialist theory of knowledge, Mao explains how after making the leap from perceptual knowledge to rational knowledge, one must leap from rational knowledge to testing this theory in practice. By reflecting on the successes and failures of this practice, a deeper form of rational knowledge is developed which is again tested in practice, and the cycle continues. In contrast, JMP's claim that PPW was practiced in Russia for 12 years "without clear theoretical reflection" betrays his

mechanical understanding of the relationship between theory and practice. In his view, it was only decades later, when Mao wrote about PPW, that someone finally bothered to develop rational knowledge of the revolutionary strategy of the Bolshevik Revolution.

It is true that later reflection on revolutionary struggles can be helpful to summarize their successes and in particular their failures, the latter of which revolutionaries in the immediacy of a struggle may not have fully grasped.⁶⁴ However, to claim that the Bolsheviks did not have rational knowledge of their own strategy for revolution is an absurd form of sophistry. It is important to reiterate that this claim is the basis of JMP's argument that PPW is both universal and was not understood as a strategy until Mao wrote about it. This theory is ultimately rooted in the bourgeois conception of a "great revealer" who appears and clarifies the past and the way forward, while others remain blind and without rational knowledge of their actions. In practice it justifies a commandist approach to politics, in which the masses must rely on a "theory-master" who is supposed to have all the correct ideas. It is a thoroughly revisionist conception of leadership and of revolutionary theory.

In his 2016 book *Continuity and Rupture: Philosophy in Maoist Terrain* JMP puts forward new formulations and justifications for the universality of PPW. Although the book is more of the same eclectic academic nonsense, his new "contributions" are worth analyzing in detail. Elaborating on his previous musings, JMP claims that the qualitative advances in the Maoist understanding of the party—above and beyond the Leninist party of a new type—necessitate that one pursue PPW as a revolutionary strategy. His analysis of the differences between the Maoist and Leninist understandings of the party are quite revealing:

What strategic theory would the Maoist "party of the new type" produce, based on its method of organization? A movement of movements that seeks to embed itself everywhere in society, deployed through every progressive counter-hegemonic movement, will necessarily have a different strategic approach than a party formation that does not invest itself in these movements, maintaining an agitational distance in the hope that the radical elements of these movements will

63 JMP, *On Protracted Peoples War as a Universal Development of Revolutionary Theory*.

64 A key example would be Marx's writings on the Paris Commune in *The Civil War in France*, online here: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1871/civil-war-france/>

*just gravitate towards its orbit. A party that seeks to locate a dispersed proletariat, rather than imagining that a ready-made revolutionary agent can be found at the traditional “point of production” organized according to trade-union consciousness, will also develop a strategy of dispersal. A party that employs the mass-line, and believes it is important to locate the most radical elements of these masses, will find itself confronting a complexity that the traditional Leninist appreciation of proletarian identity cannot grasp. In this sense, the theory of PPW is at least one theory that fulfills the demands produced by a party that understands reality in a manner that transgresses the boundaries of traditional Leninist thought while also reaffirming the crucial aspects of Leninism: rupture and continuity.*⁶⁵

This comparison between the Maoist and Leninist views of the party indicates either a complete and total ignorance of the history of the Russian Revolution—which is entirely possible because JMP has claimed that it was a form of PPW—or a deliberately deceptive account to support claims that PPW is universal. JMP’s claim that the Bolsheviks maintained “an agitational distance in the hope that the radical elements of these movements [would] just gravitate towards its orbit” is in direct contradiction with Lenin’s own writings about their activities. For example, in his 1902 text *What is to Be Done?* Lenin argued that,

A network of agents that would form in the course of establishing and distributing the common newspaper would not have to “sit about and wait” for the call for an uprising, but could carry on the regular activity that would guarantee the highest probability of success in the event of an uprising. Such activity would strengthen our contacts with the broadest strata of the working masses and with all social strata that are discontented with the autocracy, which is of such im-

*portance for an uprising. Precisely such activity would train all local organisations to respond simultaneously to the same political questions, incidents, and events that agitate the whole of Russia and to react to such “incidents” in the most vigorous, uniform, and expedient manner possible; for an uprising is in essence the most vigorous, most uniform, and most expedient “answer” of the entire people to the government.*⁶⁶

From this it should be clear that, while agitation was an important aspect of the work that Bolsheviks did, it was by no means the only type of work they did. As Lenin makes clear in this document and others, they did all sorts of legal and illegal work among the Russian masses to organize and prepare for revolution. JMP’s claim that the Leninist party maintained an “agitational distance” from the masses is nothing new. In *What is to Be Done?* Lenin debunks precisely such a criticism leveled against him and the publication *Iskra* by the adventurist Nadezhdin who claimed that “*Iskra* thinks that around it and in the activities in its behalf people will gather and organise.”⁶⁷

If repeating the claims of such an unprincipled adventurist was not bad enough, JMP also claims that the Leninist party imagined “that a ready-made revolutionary agent can be found at the traditional ‘point of production’ organized according to trade-union consciousness” and that this was related to the limits of the “traditional Leninist” view of proletarian identity! This argument reveals JMP’s complete ignorance of the most basic and fundamental aspects of Lenin’s views on the party of a new type. It was against precisely such an economist and trade-unionist view of a revolutionary party that Lenin struggled tirelessly. The main thrust of *What is to Be Done?* is to criticize those like Martynov who reduced Marxism to little more than trade-unionist consciousness and thus negated the possibility of revolution. Lenin even went so far as to say: “Trade-unionist politics of the

65 JMP, *Continuity and Rupture: Philosophy in Maoist Terrain* (Washington: Zero Books, 2016), p. 210-211. This is but one of numerous examples of the eclectic nonsense that fills 270 pages of this book. We found this quote to be particularly instructive because of the absurdity of the claims put forward in it, and felt that it accurately reflected the general revisionist essence of the book. Another such absurdity can be found on page 218 where JMP claims:

“The civil war already exists; the class struggle, which results in so many massacres even when the proletariat is not consciously fighting the bourgeoisie, needs to be engaged and, in this engagement, made visible.”

This claim that the violence of the daily functioning of the bourgeois state is the same thing as a civil war, is also used to justify the idea that PPW is universal. It also has a resonance with the adventurist musing of the Red Brigades on the topic of Civil War. This sort of sophistry is a negation of the Marxist principle of “concrete investigations of concrete situations.”

66 Lenin, *What is to Be Done?*, p. 173.

67 *Ibid.*, p. 156-166.

working class is precisely *bourgeois politics* of the working class.”⁶⁸ And, in politicizing against the Economists of his time, Lenin repeatedly emphasized the importance of working amongst the broad masses of Russia who could be drawn into antagonistic struggle against Tsarism:

*We must ‘go among all classes of the population’ as theoreticians, as propagandists, as agitators, and as organisers. No one doubts that the theoretical work of Social-Democrats should aim at studying all the specific features of the social and political condition of the various classes. But extremely little is done in this direction as compared with the work that is done in studying the specific features of factory life.*⁶⁹

To be clear, there are real differences between the Maoist understanding of the party and the Leninist understanding of the party.⁷⁰ But JMP either has no real understanding of these differences or intentionally distorts them to support the idea that the PPW is a universal strategy for revolution and an essential aspect of Maoism. Either way his writing is of little use for revolutionaries except insofar as it serves as a negative example, an instance of waving the red flag to oppose the red flag.

RGA and Their Eclectic Negation of Maoism

Red Guards Austin (RGA) is an eclectic group whose regurgitation of half-baked bourgeois academic theory, revisionist practice, and internet-posturing includes, perhaps unsurprisingly, a somewhat idiosyncratic formulation of PPW. Not to be outdone by JMP and other eclectics, RGA insists on putting forward their own “unique” conception of PPW. A brief analysis of their understanding of and plan for PPW will help further clarify the bankruptcy of such approaches. Their views contradict the most fundamental theories of MLM and Mao’s writing on PPW.

Before discussing the specifics of their “strategy” for PPW in the US, it is necessary to examine RGA’s argument for the universality of PPW:

Mao Zedong’s theory of protracted people’s war is uni-

68 Ibid., p. 83.

69 Ibid., p. 81-82.

70 For more on this topic c.f. Ajith’s *The Maoist Party*, available here: <http://www.signalfire.org/2015/12/30/the-maoist-party-ajith/>. Ajith’s document is by no means the definitive answer to this question, but contains meaningful Maoist analysis of the foundations of the Leninist theory of party and the contributions that Mao made to this which serve as the basis of a Maoist party.

71 RGA, *Condemned to Win*.

72 Ibid.

*versal to all countries of the world. In understanding the concept of PPW, we must understand that Maoism is not a dogma—that all who hold to MLM must be able to correctly and creatively apply the universal to the specific. PPW in an imperialist country will therefore look very different from its application in China, which varies still from its application in Peru. Its three aspects are its protracted nature, the people, and the armed fighting.*⁷¹

While acknowledging that MLM entails “creatively apply[ing] the universal to the specific,” RGA does not bother to discuss how they arrived at the idea that PPW is universal based on studying the particularities of past revolutions. Instead they start from the assumption that PPW is universal, and then say that its universality needs to be applied to the particular conditions. When discussing the supposed universality of PPW, RGA lists three factors: “its protracted nature, the people, and the armed fighting.” These points are so general that they apply to any and all revolutions in which one class overthrows another, and can hardly be called the universal aspect of PPW unless PPW is just another name for revolution—in which case PPW is abstracted from all of its concrete context in China and elsewhere and reduced to a mere formalism.

However, RGA does not seem to believe this to be the case; they insist that PPW is a new type of revolutionary strategy, qualitatively different from the October Road. In discussing the October Revolution they state that:

*Insurrection in the Leninist sense will not be possible, and waiting for such an event will only decrease the fighting capacity of the people and stifle them by disallowing their mass participation in the overthrow of the capitalist state. Such ideas should be discarded for the present day, while being understood for their relevance to particular bygone historical moments.*⁷²

According to this logic, the October Revolution did not involve the three aspects of “protracted nature, the people, and the armed fighting.” But of course,

the October Revolution was the culmination of years of organizing to develop mass organizations, to grow and strengthen the party, to raise the level of consciousness of the masses, and to split the police and army so that some would side with the cause of the revolution. But according to RGA, either none of this was protracted, or it didn't involve the people, or it wasn't "the armed fighting!" Clearly RGA has not bothered to investigate the October Revolution as, in their view, it belongs to a "bygone historical moment." This is all the more evident in that they claim that insurrection "in the Leninist sense" will "stifle [the people] by disallowing their mass participation in the overthrow of the capitalist state." Either RGA is being deliberately deceptive or they really do not know that the October Revolution was only possible precisely because of mass participation in the insurrections and related political struggles. And all this from an organization which claims to be MLM. Never mind that Lenin called "concrete analysis of concrete situations" the living soul of Marxism, from RGA's practice we can see that they believe that this too must be from a bygone era!

Let's leave all this aside and pretend for a moment that these are convincing arguments for the universality of PPW. How then does RGA believe that this will play out in the US? In short, it is difficult to say. Their writing on the topic is an incredibly convoluted and eclectic mishmash of speculative posturing and grandiose proclamations:

*We won't necessarily "surround the city from the countryside," but a rural component will be necessary, with rolling urban attacks in a wave-like motion, geared toward economic instability. The slums, ghettos, and border towns will be especially hospitable to the formation of base areas in the form of bio-political dual power as a long-term strategy put into motion as the first phase, long before the fighting and shooting of the PPW starts.*⁷³

One can be forgiven for being confused by this muddled Dühring-esque nonsense. In order to clarify what is being said, and to distill the political content of RGA's theory, we will break it down sentence by sentence. To start, RGA admits that they won't ("necessarily") surround the city from the countryside, a fact that should be obvious to anyone familiar with basic demographic statis-

tics of the U.S. At present in the US, the majority of the masses involved in production are not located in the rural countryside, as they are in semi-feudal countries, but rather in urban and suburban centers. But lest anyone be confused and believe that RGA is saying that the countryside doesn't matter, they are quick to state that there will be a rural component and that this—or perhaps guerrillas in the city, the grammar is ambiguous—will launch "rolling urban attacks in a wave-like motion, geared toward economic instability." What exactly does this mean?

In our view, it seems most likely that RGA is referencing *Why is It That Red Political Power Can Exist in China?* and/or *Struggle in The Ching kang Mountains* in both of which Mao discusses the policies of the Border Area Special Committee and the Army Committee of the Party. One of these policies is to advance "in a series of waves to expand the area under the independent regime, and oppose the policy of expansion by adventurist advance."⁷⁴ In the context of the PPW in China this meant making methodical advances into villages when the enemy was in a period of temporary political instability and therefore would have more difficulty deploying military force to repress the agrarian revolution. In China, these expansions of the base areas were not "geared toward economic instability," but rather sought to grow red political power by raising the level of consciousness among the masses and furthering the agrarian revolution. In China this entailed the creation of peasant associations as well as cultural and propaganda campaigns. These organizations and activities helped to clarify the stakes of the agrarian revolution. They also rallied the peasantry to join the Red Guards and village militias, and broadly resolved political and economic contradictions among the people that prevented or inhibited their ability to get involved in political work.

But all of these particulars are too much for RGA to bother with. Instead of really investigating the history of the Chinese Revolution, RGA prefers to posture. In our view, the main thrust of the idea behind "rolling urban attacks in a wave-like motion, geared toward economic instability" is to "fuck shit up" and smash some windows. In short, little more than anarchist fantasies of adventurism and sabotage. This is reflected in RGA's mechanical view that "society is transformed by violent revo-

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Mao, *Why is it That Red Political Power Can Exist in China?*, MZSW vol 1. p 67-68. and *Struggle in The Ching kang Mountains*, MZSW, Vol 1., pp. 75-76.

lution against the economic base” and that it is only after the revolution that cultural transformation of the superstructure is possible.⁷⁵

These politics are nothing new; they are just more of the same petty-bourgeois politics which have been unable to build proletarian power in this country or around the world. In order to distract from this, and masquerade as something different and better than anarchism, RGA adopts the form of appearance of Maoism; in this case by speaking of building base areas. But even in their description of these base areas RGA cannot resist the temptation of eclecticism, describing base areas as a “form of bio-political dual power.”⁷⁶

RGA attempts to fuse two into one, mixing bourgeois academic philosophy with the Marxist concept of dual power. While this in and of itself is indicative of a petty-bourgeois eclecticism, RGA’s claim that base areas are a form of dual power also indicates that they do not understand the concept of dual power. To clarify it is helpful to investigate what Lenin wrote on the topic. In discussing the matter in his 1917 essay *The Dual Power*, Lenin states: “Alongside the Provisional Government, the government of bourgeoisie, another government has arisen, so far weak and incipient, but undoubtedly a government that actually exists and is growing—the Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies.”⁷⁷ He further elaborates on this topic in his 1917 document *The Tasks of the*

Proletariat in Our Revolution: “There is not the slightest doubt that such an ‘interlocking’ cannot last long. Two powers cannot exist in a state. One of them is bound to pass away.”⁷⁸ From this it should be clear that the dual power in Russia was not a liberated area free from the bourgeois state—as the red base areas were in China—but rather the existence of two powers internal to one state. It is for this reason that, in discussing the creation of red base areas in China, Mao does not refer to them as a dual power, but rather states “The long-term survival inside a country of one or more small areas under Red political power completely encircled by a White regime is a phenomenon that has never occurred anywhere else in the world.”⁷⁹ But, as we have seen, RGA does not bother much with concrete investigations. Instead they eclectically import this concept of “bio-political dual power” into their theory without bothering to explain in any detail how they plan on building liberated base areas in cities where the army can be deployed in a matter of hours, where the water supply can be shut off at the touch of a button, where the flow of electricity can be stopped instantly, and where food shipments can be blockaded.

Clearly, such a view of PPW is a total negation of the basic principles of MLM and of Mao’s writings on PPW as discussed above. This sort of negation is typical of RGA’s overall political orientation which we analyzed in our recent document, *RGA is Not an MLM Organization*.⁸⁰ RGA and other such dogmatists do not have an

75 RGA, *On Identity Opportunism*, <https://redguardsaustin.wordpress.com/2017/04/10/on-identity-opportunism/> See also our discussion of these idea in *RGA is Not an MLM Organization*, available at: <https://www.bannedthought.net/USA/MassProletariat/2017/MP-RGA-IsNotAnMLM-Organization-171226.pdf>

76 This reference to biopolitical dual power is never defined by RGA, and they provide no citation or source of inspiration for using this term. One prominent reference to this term can be found on an eclectic blog named *Kurukshetra*, which is named after a Hindu epic and describes itself as: “writing and analysis on philosophy, political economy, and the process of social change from a revolutionary Marxist/communist/anarchist perspective.” In an article titled *Biopolitics, Dual Power, and the Revolutionary Characteristics of “Serve the People” Programs*, the author attempts to blend the politics of the Black Panthers with the writings of the bourgeois academic Alberto Toscano and even goes so far as to state that the comprador Iranian proxy-force Hezbollah is an example of biopolitical dual-power!

The term biopolitics was pioneered by Michel Foucault, a French petty-bourgeois academic and self proclaimed “historical nominalist.” In his work, the term biopolitics refers to the means by which a state controls the life of the physical and political bodies of a population. Foucault identifies biopolitics as specific form of liberalism: “Studying liberalism as the general framework of biopolitics.” Clearly this is not, in Foucault’s view, a revolutionary form of government, but a reactionary regime and means of control and subjugation. What’s more, the concept itself is based on Foucault’s anti-dialectical approach to philosophy, and it is eclecticism blend it with a Marxist concept like dual-power and assume that they are compatible. It is even more eclectic—and theoretically lazy—to assume, as RGA does, that biopolitics is actually a “good thing” and that is something that we should aspire to in our revolutionary work. Either RGA used this term in total ignorance of what it actually means, or they are advocating a fundamentally bourgeois form of government. Either way, their usage of this term is a total negation of an MLM approach to theory and practice.

77 V.I. Lenin, “The Dual Power,” *Lenin Collected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964) Volume 24, p. 38-41. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/apr/09.htm>

78 V.I. Lenin, “The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution (Draft Platform for the Proletarian Party),” *Lenin Collected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964) Volume 24, p. 55-92. Online here: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/tasks/ch03.htm>

79 Mao, *Why is it That Red Political Power Can Exist in China?*, p 67-68.

80 Available at: <https://www.bannedthought.net/USA/MassProletariat/2017/MP-RGA-IsNotAnMLM-Organization-171226.pdf>

interest in investigating the particularities of past revolutionary struggles to learn universal lessons from them. Their politics of impatience demands that they instead substitute bravado and showmanship for revolutionary theory and practice. However, little can come of this sort of posturing, unless one is in the practice of measuring

success by Facebook likes. The theoretical bankruptcy of RGA's musings on PPW should be clear to anyone with even a cursory familiarity with the nature of PPW as practiced by the revolutionaries in China, India, and elsewhere around the world.

3. Conclusion: Maoist Strategy in the U.S. and the Tasks in Front of Us

THUS FAR, the primary focus of this paper has been refuting the idea that PPW is a universal strategy. In doing so, our hope has been to clarify some mistaken ideas that comrades have, and to expose those who masquerade as Maoist as the petty-bourgeois eclectics that they are. Along the way, we have also laid down some key points about revolutionary strategy in this country. In our conclusion, we will attempt to synthesize these points and lay the foundation for greater theoretical clarity, now that the pests have been swept away. These points will be somewhat general. However, they can begin to address many of the key questions in front of us, and we hope that they can clarify a way forward for those with a sincere desire for MLM politics.

In order to understand our situation we must have a grasp of the primary and determining contradictions on a global scale, and internal to the U.S. In addition, we must draw on historical lessons to develop a revolutionary strategy suitable to our particular situation and have tactical means to advance on a revolutionary road in line with this strategic assessment. To argue otherwise is to divorce theory and practice, and to justify all sorts of economist and opportunist politics. While it is beyond the scope of the paper to flesh out a complete analysis of this moment, a brief analysis of some fundamental contradictions and recent developments will be helpful to clarify our situation.

On a global scale, the contradiction between the imperialists and the oppressed peoples of the world constitutes a fundamental contradiction, resulting in the wholesale plundering of entire economies and subjugation of entire states, politically, culturally, militarily and

economically, for the benefit of several competing imperialist ruling classes. This situation creates a basis for rich revolutionary resistance on a global level. The leading revolutionary movements in India, Turkey, and the Philippines correspondingly reflect pioneering forces that have seized on these openings. These revolutionary movements are beacons for the international communist movement.

Another fundamental contradiction on the global scale is the competition between the imperialist states. Inter-imperialist contradictions have been sharpening recently. This has manifested in increased levels of military and economic conflict and competition. For the U.S. ruling class, its ability to maintain a dominant position globally has been increasingly challenged by the rise of Russian and Chinese imperialist powers. The U.S. ruling class' military "adventures" over the past few decades have also severely impacted its position globally. It has waltzed into deepening quagmires abroad that have exacerbated economic and political contradictions at home, and hastened the erosion of its status as the dominant imperialist power in the world. What's more, these military campaigns have often failed to achieve their goal of securing U.S. domination in the countries in question, as is evident in China's significant inroads in post-Saddam Iraq.⁸¹

The third fundamental contradiction of the contemporary world, in particular in the capitalist countries, is between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. This manifests in different forms, including in the struggles of workers to improve their conditions, as well as the various schemes of capitalists to increase worker productivity. This contradiction has been sharpening in the U.S. and globally since the 2008 economic crisis, and this is evident

81 See Tim Arango and Clifford Krauss, "China is Reaping Biggest Benefits of Iraq Oil Boom", New York Times, June 2, 2013, online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/03/world/middleeast/china-reaps-biggest-benefits-of-iraq-oil-boom.html> "We lost out," said Michael Makovsky, a former Defense Department official in the Bush administration who worked on Iraq oil policy. "The Chinese had nothing to do with the war, but from an economic standpoint they are benefiting from it, and our Fifth Fleet and air forces are helping to assure their supply." Quoted from N.B. Turner, *Is China an Imperialist Country?* <http://www.bannedthought.net/International/Red-Path/01/RP-8.5x11-IsChinaAnImperialistCountry-140320.pdf>

internal to the U.S. in the new and increased efforts to track and monitor worker efficiency, in the increasing reliance of businesses on temporary and part-time workers, in increasing and deepening unemployment, and in various statistical tricks pursued by the U.S. government to hide the actual levels of unemployment and underemployment in this country.

Internally, throughout its history, the U.S. bourgeoisie has consistently relied on a system of white supremacy to control, contain, and divide the masses of people internal to its borders. In its never-ending drive to expand its capital, the ruling class has required an ever-more disposable and replaceable labor force. In particular, Black and other oppressed peoples have constituted the most exploited and most oppressed sections of the masses.

Machinations by the ruling class to adapt its productive enterprises to a changing environment have particularly affected non-white workers. Following rebellions in the U.S. in the 1960s and 1970s—and the murder of dozens of revolutionary leaders especially in the Black Panther Party—the capitalists attempted on one hand to contain dissent among Black Americans through duplicitous social and educational programs which aimed to develop and reinforce a comprador ideology among the masses, and on the other hand to exclude them from legal economic activity altogether. The latter was often achieved by relocating factories from dense urban areas to the southern United States or abroad. The creation of a large unemployed Black population and the corresponding expansion of mass incarceration and deepening police abuse of non-white Americans, and Black Americans in particular, has fueled deep resentment and inspired new outbreaks and forms of resistance in recent years.

The U.S. monopoly capitalist class has also tried to maintain its competitive edge through the wide-scale consolidation of enterprises into detachable parts of larger monopolies. This has reduced managerial staffs. In addition, they have engaged in speculative adventures in housing markets, and more recently a ballooning student loan industry. These trends have resulted in setbacks for the American petty-bourgeoisie, and in a degree of pro-

letarianization. Some, when confronted with fractures in what they previously thought to be a secure “American dream,” have struggled to adopt a pro-people outlook. But more often, this development has resulted in new forms of chauvinism and demands that the “dream” be restored through restoration of concrete and symbolic forms of privilege. This backward belief has been long catered to by the U.S. system of so-called democratic elections. On one hand, this message was taken up by the Trump campaign and supporters, whose slogan “Make American Great Again” can be read as the age-old American nativist campaign slogan to “Make American White Again.”⁸² On the other hand, the Democratic Party, through Hillary Clinton and its “alternative” representatives such as Bernie Sanders, tried hard to show that they would do a better job of maintaining American dominance in the world politically and militarily, and implicitly promised to maintain the current system of exploitation and oppression at home.

Internally, the U.S. ruling class maintains a system of bourgeois-democracy, a system which in reality offers democracy only for the bourgeoisie and dictatorship for the masses. The myth of American democracy remains intact among much of the population, and has been used to divert the masses away from radical organizing in favor of the ritual of elections for candidates who swear to serve as representatives of the ruling class. As the paper *The Myth of American Democracy* states, “The U.S. is no longer the only global imperialist superpower. It needs to create a bi-partisan consensus in the Democratic and Republican parties, and among their different social bases, to provide political and military support for the American ruling class in its potentially unpopular efforts to mobilize against a Chinese-Russian military alliance, and against the growing number of revolutionary challenges to its global empire.”⁸³

Hillary Clinton was unable to rally enough of a mass base to the polls, despite the fact that the majority of the U.S. ruling class preferred her candidacy. In the year since the election, President Trump has committed a cascade of blunders in his function as official executive, commander-in-chief, and representative head of U.S. imperialism.

82 Among the negative forces described above, RGA erroneously characterizes a new threat of fascist power in the U.S. signified by Trump and his supporters as something that must be opposed at all costs. Proclaiming that Trump and various alt-right groups represent a new fascist form of rule is to underplay the continuity of white-supremacist brutality since the foundation of the U.S. system itself. This is related to RGA’s nonsensical support for the strategy of PPW in the U.S. and the formation of base areas.

83 *The Myth of American Democracy* <https://thealternativehistoriesblog.files.wordpress.com/2017/03/mythofdemocracy1.pdf>

Our hope is that this brief analysis of our contemporary situation, and the following remarks on revolutionary strategy and tactics in imperialist countries will help to clarify the tasks in front of us.

Professional Revolutionaries and the Dialectic of Spontaneity and Consciousness

In 1938 Mao stated, “Before the outbreak of war, all organization and struggle are in preparation for war.”⁸⁴ This applies to our situation as well. The analysis above should clarify that the accumulation of revolutionary forces in preparation for coordinated nation-wide insurrection—likely followed by a civil war—is the only correct revolutionary strategy for the U.S. In this country, a long period of struggle will be needed to build the foundation for a revolutionary movement on multiple fronts that eventually will be prepared to seize state power and smash the bourgeois state during a revolutionary crisis. We should also be clear that we are operating from a position of weakness given the lack of revolutionary forces in the U.S. at this moment, and the lack of familiarity with revolutionary politics and history among the broad masses across this country.

However, these obstacles can be overcome. In order to do so we must assess the successes and failures of recent revolutionary struggles in this country, while linking this assessment to a study of revolutionary history and contemporary revolutionary movements abroad. An objective analysis of the nature of the enemy—the U.S. imperialist ruling class, its repressive power, and the centrality of white supremacy to its system of exploitation and oppression—is also necessary for revolutionary advance. All of this helps to clarify the stakes of this moment and provides us with a path forward.

From this it should be clear that we must join the masses in their daily struggles so as to build deep links with them. Only by doing so is it possible to link the struggle for the short-term interests of the masses with their long-term interests in revolution and communism. This work itself forces us to confront key contradictions among the masses and develop the means to correctly handle them. In order to do so, we need to build organizations of professional revolutionaries, not part-time activ-

ists.

Professional revolutionaries are the foundation of the party of a new type that Lenin describes in *What is to Be Done?* and no proletarian revolution is possible without them. But the development of professional revolutionaries is not an isolated process, and must occur in dialectical relationship with mass struggles. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that professional revolutionaries—that is to say, cadre in MLM organizations—join in daily struggles. This is not reducible to tabling a few times a week, doing some agitation outside workplaces, or organizing antifa protests. It means that we must join the masses in their workplaces and neighborhoods to organize. For our collective during the past year this has meant having pairs of comrades at workplaces that showed potential for organized rebellion. In this process, we ourselves are transformed as we work to develop mass struggles.

Mass struggles can and do develop on their own, and as they arise we should participate in them as well. However, there is a relatively low level of spontaneous mass struggle in the U.S. at this time, despite certain favorable objective conditions on the national level. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that Maoists join the masses in daily struggles, even nascent ones, to spark further developments. It is true that where there is oppression there is resistance, but there is a big difference between a few acts of individual resistance and defiance by the masses, and large scale organized resistance by a whole workplace or neighborhood. The reality is that resistance to oppression, even on a small scale, can be organized and developed into a force capable of confronting and lessening the degree of oppression and exploitation locally. Through principled revolutionary work this can be incorporated into the larger struggle to break all chains. In this sense, oppression creates the basis for it to be overcome, and we must seize upon this opening and develop it into a proletarian force.

Through patient and methodical work among the people we can raise the level of conscious struggle, further mass initiative, and see mass leaders and cadre develop from among the masses. MLM is based on a dialectical understanding of the contradiction between spontaneity and consciousness; as Lenin put it in *What is to Be Done?* “the *spontaneous* development of the working-class move-

84 Mao, *Problems of War and Strategy*.

ment leads to its subordination to bourgeois ideology.”⁸⁵ Without conscious revolutionary action, mass struggles will inevitably be ideologically dominated by the bourgeoisie. However, conscious revolutionary action is not reducible to calling for revolution, upholding MLM as “correct and universal,” or even violent confrontations with the enemies of the people. Rather it entails correctly handling the contradictions among the people so as to create a basis for the masses to participate in struggles against their enemies in an ongoing manner. In this sense we can draw on the principles that Mao laid down in *On Protracted War*, in which he emphasizes that achieving victory over the enemy is dependent on the political unity of an organization and its relationship to the people.

The development of mass organizations based in ongoing mass struggles is an essential part of creating the basis for the people to participate in political struggles to a greater degree. These organizations cannot be formalisms or reduced to recruiting grounds for cadre. They must be a platform for the masses to take up struggle against their enemies, but also serve as a means by which they can put forward ideas, engage in discussion and debate, and overcome the isolation of capitalist society. In this regard, raising the level of conscious struggle will also create the conditions for more spontaneous struggles to arise.

In our experience, while many of the masses are supportive of rebellion and resistance, they are afraid of losing what little they have. Years of experience have taught them that those who rebel against oppressors are punished brutally for this rebellion. Because of this experience, they often doubt that rebellion can succeed, and that victory in a struggle is possible. This is a reflection of the objective contradictions of our present moment, where there is not a high level of mass struggle in this country. Many members of the masses who do rebel daily are brutally repressed, the history of the revolutionary struggles of the past are not widely remembered in detail, and the promising revolutionary movements around the world are not well known by most in the U.S. Thus the barriers to mass participation in revolutionary politics are both objective and subjective and cannot be overcome by will alone. Nor is it a question of lack of “morale” among

the masses and the proletariat, as some state or imply.

Rather, what is needed is patient and methodical work to raise the level of consciousness of the masses. This has to be done by a mix of theory and practice; winning victories in mass struggles, studying revolutionary history, discussing revolutionary struggles around the world, and exposing the injustices and outrages of the capitalist-imperialist world are all part of this process. Sloganeering, armed propaganda, and posturing cannot jump-start this process or serve as a substitute for joining with the masses in their struggles and working to raise their level of consciousness. There are no shortcuts to revolution. We must go among the people, learn from them and share revolutionary ideas with them, and in this process transform them and ourselves. Only in this manner can we spark mass rebellion, develop a party with an all-country perspective, and hasten the development of a revolutionary situation in the U.S.⁸⁶

The National Question

The U.S. is a powerful imperialist country and a prison-house of nations. This is apparent in the ongoing subjugation of the Black nation through police brutality, systematic economic disenfranchisement, mass incarceration, and more. It is also evident in the reliance of the U.S. bourgeoisie on the cheap source of labor provided by undocumented workers from Central and South America, and in the brutal oppression they face. In this regard, the U.S. monopoly capitalist class is dependent on the oppression and exploitation of oppressed nations internal to this country. This contradiction strongly influences other contradictions internal to the U.S. As such, developing a principled line on the national question in this country is of the utmost importance to furthering revolutionary developments.

Those who advocate PPW as a strategy for revolution in the U.S. often propose the creation of base areas in oppressed nationality communities as a solution to the national question. This formalistic dogmatism is best exemplified by RGA’s statement that Aztlán and New Africa “should be liberated and function as base areas, established first, with the goal of exporting the revolution to the rest of the US.”⁸⁷ This follows their statement that

85 Lenin, *What is to Be Done?*, Ch. II, “The Spontaneity of the Masses and the Consciousness of the Social-Democrats”

86 For further elaboration of this topic, see Mass Proletariat’s document “Serve the People: Be One with the People” <http://bannedthought.net/USA/MassProletariat/2017/MP-ServeThePeople-170817.pdf>

87 RGA, *Condemned to Win*.

geographic territory of these two nations “exist (roughly) all along the southern border from coast to coast.” They provide no explanation as to how they came to this conclusion. Instead of working out a line to address the contradictions between the U.S. revolutionary proletarian struggle and the struggles of Black and other oppressed peoples, RGA simply proposes to liberate these areas via “the armed fighting” and “export the revolution” from there. This sort of dogmatism is typical among advocates of the universality of PPW. It should be obvious that this line is a negation of a Maoist approach to the national question in favor of an abstract formalism.

In discussing the national question in his 1916 text *The Socialist Revolution and the Rights of Nations to Self-Determination*, Lenin emphasized that:

*“The right of nations to self-determination means only the right to independence in a political sense, the right to free, political secession from the oppressing nation. Concretely, this political, democratic demand implies complete freedom to carry on agitation in favour of secession, and freedom to settle the question of secession by means of a referendum of the nation that desires to secede. Consequently, this demand is by no means identical with the demand for secession, for partition, for the formation of small states. It is merely the logical expression of the struggle against national oppression in every form.”*⁸⁸

This distinction between upholding the right of nations to self-determination—including and up to the point of secession—and the demand for secession and partition is paved over by RGA and others who fantasize that PPW will solve the national question in the U.S. Maoism demands more than surface-level analysis and abstract proclamations and predictions about the allocation of territory. In order to actually advance the liberation of nationally oppressed peoples in this country we must instead approach the national question based on the fundamental principles of Maoism. MLM holds that it is not the place of small collectives or even a revolutionary party to decide that a nation will secede, *but rather the choice of the people of that nation.*

As Lenin states, the right of nations to self-determination is “*by no means identical to the demand for se-*

cession.” It is rather “*a democratic demand,*” and a “logical expression of the struggle against national oppression in every form.” Therefore, it is essential that revolutionaries support the democratic expression of self-determination of a nation in ways such as those promoted by Malcolm X—especially through the framework of his Organization of Afro-American Unity—and later by the Black Panthers—through self-educational programs based alongside concrete struggles of the people themselves to advance and defend their interests from the predatory oppressor nation. These organizations and their political programs represented the leading force in the Black Liberation struggle at the time. We have much to learn from their struggles against white supremacy.

There is a rich history of revolutionary tradition in the Black communities in the U.S., and while some of this has been forgotten, other aspects are remembered in part. Working to promote and develop this revolutionary tradition and revolutionary culture are key parts of struggle for national-liberation of the Black nation in the U.S. Lenin further elaborates on this:

The proletariat cannot but fight against the forcible retention of the oppressed nations within the boundaries of a given state, and this is exactly what the struggle for the right of self-determination means. The proletariat must demand the right of political secession for the colonies and for the nations that “its own” nation oppresses.

and

*The Socialists of the oppressed nations, on the other hand, must particularly fight for and maintain complete, absolute unity (also organizational) between the workers of the oppressed nation and the workers of the oppressing nation. Without such unity it will be impossible to maintain an independent proletarian policy and class solidarity with the proletariat of other countries in the face of all the subterfuge, treachery and trickery of the bourgeoisie.*⁸⁹

It is possible that in the course of revolutionary development, the demand for secession of an oppressed nation may become a primary means to further proletarian revolution in this country as a whole. Such a situation

88 Lenin, *The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination*, LCW, Vol. 22. Available online here <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/jan/x01.htm>

89 Ibid.

would necessitate broad support for secession among the people of the oppressed nation in question. In this case, it would be of primary importance for revolutionaries of both oppressed and oppressing nations to work together to prepare for secession, including through coordinated insurrections and the likely revolutionary war that would follow. It is also entirely possible that oppressed nations of this country do not secede from the U.S., and that countrywide liberation is achieved. This too would be a huge step forward towards the liberation of the oppressed nations in this country, as it would entail the expropriation of the monopoly capitalist-class in the U.S. and destruction of numerous institutions of white supremacy, including mass incarceration, the police, the standing army of the bourgeoisie, the landlords and their parasitic property managers, and other agents of capital and white supremacy.

The contradiction in the U.S. between the imperialist state and the oppressed people influences and determines the development of all other contradictions to a great degree, including the fundamental contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie—expressed in its economic form as the contradiction between the social nature of production and the private nature of appropriation. Correspondingly, workplaces depend on the maintenance and reproduction of white supremacy in this country in order to maintain myriad forms of white ownership and dominance. Police, prison guards, and fascists are not the only agents of white supremacy in this country. Nominally liberal capitalists, bosses, and even workers can and do play the roles of white supremacist oppressors in the workplace. As such, workplace struggles are of central importance, not only for the development of organized proletariat struggle, but also in the struggle for national liberation of oppressed nations in this country. The same is true of housing struggles, in which landlords function as key agents of the white supremacist state, often in direct collaboration with the police and housing courts.

There is a strong basis for resistance and organization building against white supremacy in these sites of struggle. Multinational revolutionary organizations must build strong links between the proletariat in the oppressing and oppressed nations by joining alongside the masses in such struggles, and working to advance the struggle against white supremacy by whites as well as by non-white

people. Such principled multinational organizing builds unity between the proletariat of the oppressing and oppressed nations in the fight against the U.S. monopoly capitalist class. This work does not negate the basis for oppressed nationality organizations to play a primary role in various fronts of revolutionary struggle as well. However, multinational revolutionary organizations must take on the essential task of struggling against white-national chauvinist ideas among the broad masses and among cadre. As the South Western Regional Bureau of CPI (Maoist) emphasizes in their *Leadership Training Programme*:

We say that we are communists, but are born and brought up with the values of the prevailing ruling classes. When we join the Party those ideas do not disappear by themselves. Besides, we live in society which such feudal and bourgeois values are rampant and quite naturally impact us. In such a situation, there is a need for consistent struggle to change ourselves. Some of our incorrect values are deep-rooted in our subconscious and built around a number of insecurities. [...] Though we may suppress them under some conditions, they assert themselves in other conditions more aggressively.⁹⁰

In order to overcome such tendencies among the masses and in collectives, collectives must promote genuine revolutionary leadership of oppressed nationality comrades. This can only be achieved by developing a principled political line internal to a revolutionary organization, working to correctly handle contradictions among the people, and from this basis struggling to overcome the enemy in concrete situations.

Revolution, Revolutionary Situations, and the Dialectic of Subjective and Objective

We have already explained how the ability of imperialist states to rapidly deploy powerful military forces anywhere within their borders is a major reason that PPW is not a viable revolutionary strategy in imperialist countries. Some may take this to mean that we must confront the entirety of the state's repressive force, as it exists today, in an insurrection. However, the reality is that a coordinated insurrection in multiple cities across the country is not

90 South Western Regional Bureau of CPI (Maoist), *Leadership Training Programme*, cited in Jan Myrdal, *Red Star Over India: As the Wretched of the Earth Are Rising. Impressions, Reflections and Preliminary Inferences* (Delhi: Archana Das and Subrata Das, 2012), pp. 115-116.

possible at this point, and not simply because we do not have sufficient political and military power. It is also because the U.S. state is too strong at present for coordinated insurrections to succeed. Only in a revolutionary situation will it be possible for such a strategy to overthrow the bourgeois and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat.

But what is a revolutionary situation? Lenin described a revolutionary situation as one in which “the ‘lower classes’ do not want to live in the old way and the ‘upper classes’ cannot carry on in the old way.”⁹¹ Thus we see that both the subjective clarity of the masses and the objective difficulties of the ruling classes are factors in producing a revolutionary situation. Due to crises in capitalist-imperialism and spontaneous rebellions of the masses, these situations will come about independent of anyone’s will. However, it is the level of conscious organization among the oppressed and exploited masses that determines if a revolutionary situation can be transformed into a successful revolution. As Mao and others said:

We have always maintained that a revolution cannot be made at will and is impossible unless a revolutionary situation objectively exists. But the outbreak and the victory of revolution depend not only on the existence of a revolutionary situation but also on the preparations and efforts made by the subjective revolutionary forces.

It is “Left” adventurism if the party of the proletariat does not accurately appraise both the objective conditions and subjective forces making for revolution and if it rashly launches a revolution before the conditions are ripe. But it is Right opportunism, or revisionism, if the proletarian party makes no active preparations for revolution before the conditions are ripe, or dare not lead a revolution and seize state power when a revolutionary situation exists and the conditions are ripe.

Until the time arrives for seizing state power, the fundamental and most important task for the proletarian party is to concentrate on the painstaking work of accumulating revolutionary strength. The active leadership given in day-to-day struggle must have as its central aim the building up of revolution-

ary strength and the preparations for seizing victory in the revolution when the conditions are ripe. The proletarian party should use the various forms of day-to-day struggle to raise the political consciousness of the proletariat and the masses of the people, to train its own class forces, to temper its fighting capacity and to prepare for revolution ideologically, politically, organizationally and militarily. It is only in this way that it will not miss the opportunity of seizing victory when the conditions for revolution are ripe. Otherwise, the proletarian party will simply let the opportunity of making revolution slip by even when a revolutionary situation objectively exists.”⁹²

As we can see from this quote, we cannot simply make revolution by will. The objective conditions for revolution must exist for revolution to be possible, but also, we cannot wait until a revolutionary situation is upon us to begin organizing. Some try to frame proponents of an insurrectionary strategy in imperialist countries as advocating exactly this sort of complacency. However, any honest revolutionary who is familiar with dialectics should be aware that preparations and training for an insurrection happen over many years.

Through our subjective action we actively transform our situation and create more favorable conditions for the masses to rebel, on a country-wide and a local scale. Coordinating standing up to a supervisor, landlord, teacher, administrator, cop, or commanding officer collectively, posting a petition against various injustices, and/or holding a political strike can all transform the local situation. If done well, they also demonstrate the basis for rebellion in other locations and show how by rebelling in an organized manner, we are capable of winning victories through struggle.

So too, on a national scale, mass rebellions, protests, strikes, and boycotts show the basis for others to stand up, while also weakening the power of the ruling class. In smaller and larger sites of rebellions, such work often entails both legal and illegal components. Comrades must carry out this work according to the needs of the mass struggle in both particular situations and in view of the overall long-term goals of revolution and commu-

91 Lenin, “Left-Wing” Communism: an Infantile Disorder, LCW, Vol. 31. Available online here: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1920/lwc/ch09.htm>

92 The Editorial Departments of *Renmin Ribao* (People’s Daily) and *Hongqi* (Red Flag), “The Proletarian Revolution and Khrushchev’s Revisionism: Eighth Comment on the Open Letter of the Central Committee of the CPSU,” March 31, 1964, *The Polemic on the General Line of the International Communist Movement* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1965), p. 393. Emphasis ours.

nism. The growth and conscious development of mass struggles builds the capacity for revolutionary organizations in different locations to share experiences and build principled unity. These are important steps towards the creation of a revolutionary party.

As rebellions increase on a national scale, a basis exists for a large number of the masses to adopt a revolutionary orientation. Lenin described how in 1917 in Russia “Millions and tens of millions of people, who had been politically dormant for ten years and politically crushed by the terrible oppression of tsarism and by inhuman toil for the landowners and capitalists, *have awakened and taken eagerly* to politics.”⁹³ Similar things have occurred in the U.S. historically, albeit to a lesser degree. This mass awakening to politics fractures the power of the state and creates major openings for revolutionary advance. As we saw in the Vietnam War, with the rise of organized resistance and rebellion, sections of the state’s armed forces began to splinter off and some were won over to a proletarian line. This was evident in the mutinies that occurred among American soldiers abroad and at home, aided by the presence of revolutionary groupings inside and around the armed forces.⁹⁴ Similar openings will occur again in a revolutionary situation, and will be furthered by a revolutionary party and a broad-based revolutionary movement. This will deepen contradictions within the state and within capitalist-imperialism more broadly, leading to the near paralysis of many aspects of the state and creating corresponding openings for revolutionaries. This revolutionary crisis will provide the basis for an armed uprising on a national level to seize state power.

Progress towards revolution is made by relating

proletarian political organization to mass links forged in struggle. This is the primary basis for the development of cadre within the organization as well as of mass supporters on a wide scale. The ability of a political organization to address contradictions in particular situations is determined by its political line and its class stand. The people must develop a revolutionary outlook through conscious struggle. This outlook provides the basis for principled unity between mass struggles in myriads of oppressive situations in the U.S., in particular in the struggles against exploitation at the workplace, against white supremacy, and against patriarchal subjugation. After the establishment of a revolutionary state power, this orientation provides the basis for the fight against all forms of oppression and for furthering the democracy of the masses all the way up to the establishment of communism.

Formulaic solutions offered by advocates of PPW effectively negate the objective basis to seize state power in an imperialist country and also are related to a politics that dismisses the centrality of mass democracy under socialism. After the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, mass democracy is central in the fight against all oppression. It is an essential part of the process of the withering away of the state. The negation of this essential principle can be seen in the articulations of groups like the Montreal fraction/splinter of the PCR-RCP, who proclaim patriarchy will be resolved by violent revolution and that it would be absurd to believe that patriarchy would continue to exist after the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.⁹⁵ This approach serves the bourgeoisie’s constant efforts to distort and destroy the essential aspects of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Such people are attempting to conceal the long-term trajectory

93 Lenin, *The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution (Draft Platform for the Proletarian Party)*, LCW, Vol. 24, p. 55-92. Available online here: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/tasks/index.htm>

94 For a chronology of rebellions and protests in the armed forces during this time, see: https://web.archive.org/web/20180125175436/http://www.sirnosir.com/timeline/chronology_protests.html. In one example, Black soldiers from Fort Hood held a mass-meeting to discuss not participating in the crack-down on protests in front of the Chicago Democratic Convention in 1968. This led to the military disciplining the soldiers and to the removal of “subversives” from the ranks of soldiers called in to participate in the Chicago repression. Ultimately it also led to a wholesale withdrawal of the GI’s participation in the Chicago police-riot because of fears of dissent and rebellion. For more, see the 2005 documentary *Sir no Sir*: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sir!_No_Sir!

95 See their document *A Struggle for the Safeguard of Revolutionary Proletarian Feminism* (available here: <http://www.pcr-rpc.ca/en/archives/2036>) in which they state:

“The very idea that the proletariat can take power and leave in place the oppression of women is nonsense.”

This is outright male chauvinism and ultimately serves to negate the necessary work of proletarian feminism before, during, and after a revolution. The PCR-RCP does hedge this statement by claiming that:

“This does not mean that after the seizure of power, the millennia gender bias and contempt towards women will disappear suddenly. It only means that the elimination of the material basis of oppression, coupled with the revolutionary consciousness of millions of women and men, will weaken this oppression will begin its rapid decline to disposal.”

However, the claim that a successful revolution eliminates the material basis of the oppression of women is a negation of the Marxist view

of the people's struggles to break all chains. If they are successful, the masses and revolutionaries will be more easily led astray into the swamps of economism and adventurism.

Those who pretend that PPW is possible in a country like the U.S. are fooling themselves and the masses. They will end up trying to make revolution before the conditions exist for it objectively or missing the opportunity for revolution when it does arise. In countries like India the weakness of the state, the lack of development in the hinterlands, and the fact that the majority of the productive masses are located in the countryside, makes it possible to grow and develop a localized revolutionary situation, and to eventually surround the towns from the countryside. In the U.S., such a strategy is not possible. Any attempts to develop base areas will result in premature localized insurrections oriented towards a war of position against a vastly superior military force. Instead of hoping that PPW is the solution to our problems we must work to develop a principled countrywide revolutionary force, prepared to grapple with the contradictions inherent in the seizure of state power.

Principled revolutionary organizing can hasten the development of the ongoing worldwide crisis of capitalist-imperialism. Growing inter-imperialist conflicts, related struggles by the U.S. ruling class to maintain its economic and political dominance, and internal crises of political confidence are already weakening the U.S. state. As this crisis deepens, a revolutionary situation will arise, and if adequately organized and prepared revolutionaries can seize upon this crisis and lead a proletarian revolution. However this is still some time away, and there is much work to be done before we Maoists are in a position to lead a revolution in this country.

In order to prepare—and hasten the coming of the objective conditions necessary for revolution—we must join with the masses in their daily struggles, study revolutionary history, link up with other revolutionaries around the country; we must dare to think and dare to act, dare to struggle and dare to win. We in Mass Proletariat call upon all Maoists in this country to reject the petty-bourgeois eclecticism of those who proclaim the universality of PPW. We call on you to link up and struggle to build a principled unity based on Maoist politics.

that the first form of class oppression was the oppression of women, and therefore the material basis for the oppression of women will continue until the end of class society as such. For more on this c.f. Engels' work *The Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State*.