

## 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.<sup>1</sup> 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,"<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> 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](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.<sup>4</sup> 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."<sup>5</sup>*

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."<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup> 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."<sup>8</sup>*

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](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](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.<sup>9</sup>*

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.”<sup>10</sup> This criticism is based on Lenin's analysis of revolutionary situations,<sup>11</sup> 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](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”<sup>12</sup>—and conclude from this that the world is in turmoil and chaos and that things have never been so ripe for revolution.<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup>*

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 20<sup>th</sup> century and their eventual reversals. However, summarizing these lessons is not the

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*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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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."<sup>15</sup> 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."<sup>16</sup>*

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](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.”*<sup>17</sup>

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.”<sup>18</sup> 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.”*<sup>19</sup>

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](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](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.<sup>20</sup>

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.”*<sup>21</sup>

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.”<sup>22</sup> 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.”*<sup>23</sup>

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](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.<sup>24</sup>*

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.<sup>25</sup>

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.”<sup>26</sup> 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.”<sup>27</sup>

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*.<sup>28</sup> 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.<sup>29</sup> 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)<sup>30</sup> and the Communist Party of the Philippines<sup>31</sup>—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-

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*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](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/](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/](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/](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.<sup>34</sup>*

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.<sup>35</sup>

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.<sup>36</sup>*

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).<sup>37</sup> 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.”<sup>38</sup>

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](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.<sup>39</sup>

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.<sup>40</sup> 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.<sup>41</sup>*

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.”<sup>42</sup>

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](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.”<sup>43</sup> 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.<sup>44</sup> 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*

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

<sup>44</sup> 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.<sup>45</sup>

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.<sup>46</sup> 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](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.<sup>47</sup>*

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.”<sup>48</sup> 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-*

<sup>47</sup> Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China*, p. 696.

<sup>48</sup> <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.<sup>49</sup>*

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.<sup>50</sup> 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](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."<sup>51</sup> 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 party<sup>52</sup> to the idea of "people's war until communism."<sup>53</sup>

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."

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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.”<sup>54</sup> 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.*<sup>55</sup>

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.<sup>56</sup>*

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*

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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.*<sup>57</sup>

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.*<sup>58</sup>

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*<sup>59</sup>, 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](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](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 20<sup>th</sup> 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.