

# MAOISM: SOCIAL-REVOLUTIONARY PRIMITIVITY

It has already been said by others that the modern day "Maoist" movement, i.e. adherents to the school of "Marxism-Leninism-Maoism", which preaches the cultural revolution, etc., is an upside-down reflection of the Trotskyist movement of the past; dogmatic and revisionist at the same time, simultaneously flaunting revolutionary slogans while stubbornly submitting to subordination by bourgeois interests and ideology.

Whereas the Trotskyists of the past decried "Neither the USA, nor Soviet Union!", the "Maoists" of today protest, "Neither the USA, nor China!"

## "Maoism" vs. "Mao-Zedong-Thought": More than Semantics

To begin with, we should briefly dispel confusion that often arises over this subject. There is a distinction which many comrades mistake as mere semantics, a difference over name, and not a definite difference within the ideological makeup of these two movements.

First, Mao-Zedong-Thought (MZT) is the official ideology of the Communist Party of China (CPC), as devised by the first President of the People's Republic of China, Mao Zedong. It is in main a system of study and organization, upholding such principles as the "Mass Line" (a principle regarding democratic participation), "No investigation, no right to speak", and "Seek truth from facts". It remains the official ideology of the CPC along with Marxism-Leninism. Adherents to MZT typically refer to themselves only as Marxist-Leninists, or MLs. Some adherents also attempt to apply the principles of MZT to conditions in other countries, i.e. applying "Socialism with Chinese characteristics" as "Socialism with French characteristics".

Second, Maoism, or Marxism-Leninism-Maoism (MLM), is an ideology which was first synthesized by the Peruvian revolutionary terrorist Abimael Guzmán, also called Chairman Gonzalo, in the latter part of the 1900s. It upholds such principles as the universality of the "Protracted People's War" (PPW), and the "Cultural Revolution"; however, Maoists --

especially those leading figures in Maoist thought, Chairman Gonzalo, Joma Sison, and so forth -- insist in their adherence not only to Maoism, but to Mao-Zedong-Thought as an integral part of Maoism.

In both cases, adherents are primarily of an assimilationist character: they preach “global revolution” and loyalty to this or that *state*, and almost never reference the scientific principles of nationhood as outlined by Stalin in *Marxism and the National Question*.

It is also important to note that, while Maoists do adhere to the principles put forth by men like Chairman Gonzalo as a general rule, they do not always support the people who thought of them: not every Maoist is fond of Gonzalo. Whether or not this is the case, though, it is still important to make a distinction between Maoists and MLs who adhere to Mao-Zedong-Thought.

### **What is Social Revolutionary Primitivity?**

Lenin described revolutionary primitiveness briefly but accurately in *What is to be Done?*:

We have noted that the entire student youth of the earlier period was absorbed in Marxism. Of course, these students were not only interested in Marxism as a theory; they were interested in it as an answer to the question, “What is to be done?”, as a call to take the field against the enemy.

These new warriors marched to battle with astonishingly primitive equipment and training. In a vast number of cases they had almost no equipment and absolutely no training. They marched to war like peasants from the plough, armed only with clubs. A students’ circle establishes contacts with workers and sets to work, without any connection with the old members of the movement, without any connection with study circles in other districts, or even in other parts of the same city, without any organisation of the various divisions of revolutionary work, without any systematic plan of activity covering any length of time.

True, from the historical point of view, the primitiveness of equipment was not only inevitable at first, but even legitimate as one of the conditions for the wide recruiting of fighters. But as soon as serious war operations began, the defects in our fighting organisations made themselves felt to an ever-increasing degree. The government, at first thrown into confusion and committing a number of blunders, very soon adapted itself to the new conditions of the struggle and managed to deploy well its perfectly equipped detachments of agents provocateurs,

spies, and gendarmes. Raids became so frequent, affected such a vast number of people, and cleared out the local study circles so thoroughly that the masses of the workers lost literally all their leaders, the movement assumed an amazingly sporadic character, and it became utterly impossible to establish continuity and coherence in the work. The terrible dispersion of the local leaders; the fortuitous character of the study circle memberships; the lack of training in, and the narrow outlook on, theoretical, political, and organisational questions were all the inevitable result of the conditions described above. Things have reached such a pass that in several places the workers, because of our lack of self-restraint and the inability to maintain secrecy, begin to lose faith in the intellectuals and to avoid them; the intellectuals, they say, are much too careless and cause police raids!

We will see that these very errors, this exact primitiveness, has plagued nearly every Maoist movement in existence. We can today see this exact mistake being made without shame by the Maoist Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and New People's Army (NPA), together the CPP-NPA. Let's investigate their statement, *Great Achievements of the CPP in 50 Years of Waging Revolution*:

The NPA is the main weapon of the people for defeating the enemy and winning the revolution. **Without it, the people have nothing.**

This is the blatant admission not only that they see the armed forces of the party, and not the party itself, as the "main weapon of the people for winning the revolution", but that they view the power of the masses as coming from the party, rather than the power of the party coming from the masses. Further:

The NPA carries out three integral tasks: revolutionary armed struggle, agrarian revolution and mass base building...

Under the direction of the CPP, the broad united front has twice succeeded in overthrowing the reactionary regime. First, it succeeded in fighting, undermining and overthrowing the Marcos fascist dictatorship from 1972 to 1986 and in ousting the corrupt Estrada regime in 2001. Even without as yet deploying units of the people army in the cities aside from armed city partisans, the broad masses of the people rose up to show their hatred for the ruling clique and subsequently the reactionary armed forces refused to follow orders to attack the people but decided to withdraw support from the hated ruler.

In essence, they have declared the movements in question as *spontaneous uprisings*, which occurred *completely independently* of the

party itself: thus, by their own analysis, they have rendered their armed struggle mere terrorism.

The party has managed to “succeed twice in overthrowing the reactionary regime”, without managing to seize power even once.

Let us take Lenin in Revolutionary Adventurism:

“We are not repeating the terrorists’ mistakes and are not diverting attention from work among the masses,” the Socialist-Revolutionaries assure us, and at the same time they enthusiastically recommend acts such as assassination, although everyone knows and sees perfectly well that this act was in no way connected with the masses and, moreover, could not have been by reason of the very way in which it was carried out—that the persons who commit this terrorist act neither counted on nor hoped for any definite action or support on the part of the masses. In their naïveté, the Socialist-Revolutionaries do not realise that their predilection for terrorism is most intimately linked with the fact that, from the very outset, they have always kept aloof from the working-class movement, without even attempting to become a party of the revolutionary class which is waging its class struggle.

Over-ardent protestations very often lead one to doubt and suspect the worth of whatever it is that requires such strong seasoning. Do not these protestations weary them?

I think this describes our Maoist friends most perfectly. Why such enthusiastic proclamations about the armed struggle, about captured weaponry, about assassinated policemen, when the proletariat are not only passive, but even weary, and when it is clear that these actions are the will of a few petit-bourgeois intellectuals who think they know what's best for the working class better than the working class itself?

There is a distinct historical precedent for this. To understand our modern “comrades”, we must explore the case of the aforementioned Socialist-Revolutionaries, a left party in Revolutionary era Russia that opposed the Bolsheviks on the grounds that they were too passive, too conciliatory towards capitalism and the bourgeoisie, and afraid to take action.

The Socialist-Revolutionaries (SRs), were, in a sense, the original Maoist movement. True, they predate even Mao himself. But, much like Mao first learned his political consciousness from the likes of Kropotkin and other anarchist theory before he made the change to sincere revolutionary Marxism, the SRs found their roots in the peasant

Narodniki of the century prior, a rural anarchist movement which in particular highlighted the terrorist struggle as a means to liberation.

What reason do we have for studying the SRs? Because their class-interests and class-composition, the very essence of every political movement, is identical to that of the modern "Maoist" movement. Citing again *Revolutionary Adventurism* by Lenin:

The revolutionary movement continues to grow with amazing rapidity—and “our trends” are ripening. On the other hand, trends expressing only the traditional instability of views held by the intermediate and indefinite sections of the intelligentsia try to substitute noisy declarations for rapprochement with definite classes, declarations which are all the noisier, the louder the thunder of events. “At least we make an infernal noise”—such is the slogan of many revolutionarily minded individuals who have been caught up in the maelstrom of events and who have neither theoretical principles nor social roots.

It is to these “noisy” trends that the “Socialist-Revolutionaries,” whose physiognomy is emerging more and more clearly, also belong. And it is high time for the proletariat to have a better look at this physiognomy, and form a clear idea of the real nature of these people, who seek the proletariat’s friendship all the more persistently, the more palpable it becomes to them that they cannot exist as a separate trend without close ties with the truly revolutionary class of society.

We will see it very clear, if not undeniable, that the "Maoists" of today belong to this particular group of petit-bourgeois intellectuals, who are aware their existence lies entirely on their culpability to the growing revolutionary movement, and who try in vain to attach themselves to this movement and, as a result, appeal to the only class of small-proprietors who's interests align with the petit-bourgeoisie's: the peasantry.

### **Maoism's Socialist-Revolutionary Take on Peasantry**

Characteristic of petit-bourgeois intellectuals, from the Socialist-Revolutionaries to the Peruvian Shining Path or CPP-NPA, is their intentional marring of the distinction between petit-bourgeois and peasant, peasant and proletarian. Through this slight of hand, they then attempt as petit-bourgeois intellectuals -- a class which historically shares many of the same characteristics, interests, and even social relations as the peasantry -- to disguise themselves as this mangled "proletarian-peasant", which exists only as a mask used to subvert the interests of the working movement to petit-bourgeois liberalism.

Lenin writes in *How the Socialist-Revolutionaries Sum Up the Revolution and How the Revolution has Summed Up the Socialist-Revolutionaries*:

The Social-Democrats [Bolsheviks] maintained that the proletariat and the peasantry were distinct classes in capitalist (or semi-feudal, semi-capitalist) society; that the peasantry is a class of petty proprietors that can "strike together" against the landlords and the autocracy, "on the same side of the barricades" with the proletariat in the bourgeois revolution, and that in this revolution it can, in certain cases, march in "alliance" with the proletariat, while remaining quite a separate class of capitalist society. The Socialist-Revolutionaries denied this. The main idea in their programme was not that an "alliance of the forces" of the proletariat and the peasantry was necessary, but that there was no class gulf between them, that no class distinction should be drawn between them, and that the Social-Democratic idea concerning the petty-bourgeois character of the peasantry, as distinct from the proletariat, is utterly false.

On what grounds do we have for claiming the Maoists of today repeat this mistake?

Since the "Maoist" movement is not one distinct movement, but several, oftentimes opposing movements, it can be difficult to pinpoint exactly what Maoists believe. As per dialectics, it is important we take things not only as they currently exist, i.e. their form; we need to analyze their essence, the origins of the movement, the trends it exhibits, and where its developing towards. As such, we will study first an example of this Socialist-Revolutionary mistake being repeated by none other than Chairman Gonzalo, the ideological founder of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism as the one who "synthesized" Mao's teachings with those of Marx and Lenin. The modern Maoist movement unmistakably bears the stamp of Gonzalo's influence as the founder of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (a sort of Maoist 4th International), which states in its founding declaration:

The parties and organisations of our Movement and RIM as a whole have been engaged in revolutionary struggle against imperialism and reaction. Most important has been the advanced experience of the People's War led by the Communist Party of Peru which has succeeded in mobilising the masses in their millions, sweeping aside the state in many parts of the country and establishing the power of the workers and peasants in these areas.

Bearing in mind the unmistakable ideological, if not material, influence Gonzalo had over the RIM, it is important to study the viewpoint from which the Maoists originate:

**EL DIARIO:** How do the workers and peasants participate in the People's Guerrilla Army?

**CHAIRMAN GONZALO:** The peasantry, especially the poor peasants, are the main participants, as fighters and commanders at different levels in the People's Guerrilla Army. The workers participate in the same ways, although the percentage of workers at this time is insufficient.

In just two sentences Gonzalo himself has revealed the bare truth: that the Shining Path is primarily a peasant movement, and not a worker movement. That such a movement would be the result of a petit-bourgeois intellectual, the founder of a Maoist debate club that eventually abandoned the university and took up arms, is no surprise. Further, Gonzalo damns himself horribly when he says:

In the economic base under the New Power we are establishing new relations of production. A concrete example of this is how we apply the land policy, utilizing collective work, and the organization of social life according to a new reality, with a joint dictatorship where for the first time workers, peasants and progressives rule--understanding this to mean those who want to transform this country by the only means possible--people's war.

"Workers, peasants, and progressives." Lenin attacked these exact words almost a century in advance:

To counter Marx's doctrine that there is only one really revolutionary class in modern society, the Socialist-Revolutionaries advance the trinity: "the intelligentsia, the proletariat, and the peasantry," thereby revealing a hopeless confusion of concepts.

It is this very mistake that Gonzalo, as well as his followers, have repeated without hesitation or reflection.

What is the error? It is that, due to their nature as petit-bourgeois intellectuals, who have no bearing or relation to the actual working class movement, they find sympathy for their individualistic posturing, their self-interested pseudo-socialism, only in the peasant class which historically provides the basis for petit-bourgeois ideology. The petit-bourgeoisie are, historically speaking, urban peasants, and the majority of peasants are rural petit-bourgeoisie.

In CPP-NPA founder Sison's words:

In the national united front, the proletariat and the Party rely mainly on the basic alliance of the workers and peasants to win over the urban petty bourgeoisie.

According to Sison, the proletarians and their party, and the peasants, must all serve one goal: to win over the urban petty bourgeoisie, that is to say, to appeal to the interests of petit-bourgeois intellectuals like Sison himself.

### **Protracted People's War: the 'Universal Applicability of Violence'**

We are approaching now the biggest topic in regards to this matter. The one tactic/principle which finds itself renumerated in all Maoist movements, to such an extent that it may be the defining characteristic of Maoism, is the Protracted People's War (PPW) as a universally applicable method of struggle.

What is the Protracted People's War? This question will prove elusive. For Mao, it meant something very specific: the people's war was the method of combining guerilla struggle, done by willing partisans and supporters of the Communist Party, and conventional struggle, done by the People's Liberation Army. This tactic was useful in China, where the CPC had gained overwhelming support among rural peasants (the majority of the country) while actively under attack by the Goumindang in the cities. The PPW strategy allowed the proletarian armies and their intelligentsia to seemingly disappear into the countryside, where they could reorganize before attempting to mount offensives.

Why did this strategy do so well in China? There are a couple reasons, in main:

- It was a defensive tactic, prompted by the massacre of CPC by Goumindang, and then prompted again by the Japanese invasion, and then prompted once more by another attempt at massacre by the Goumindang following WWII. The tactic relied on the *enemy* taking the offensive side, and further, making mistakes, acting out of retaliation, inflicting terror on the masses and thus turning the general population against the state. What modern Maoists too often fail to understand is that this was not formulated as a universal solution to the seizure of state power, nor was the strategy even devised to *overthrow* the regime in the first place, so much as *defend the proletarian movement from destruction by the regime*.

- China at the time was underdeveloped. It had a massive landscape, but no fast transportation between the various cities. This meant that it was possible to isolate the cities so that they could not receive outside support, and then coordinate with the communists already in the cities. These favorable conditions were very specific, and are very hard to come by. It is arguable that no such society exists today where the cities can be cut off in such a way by guerilla armies, owing to the existence of high-speed travel (particularly by air) and long-distance instant communication.
- The CPC already had a large base of support when it picked up the armed struggle. It was not a mere clique of revolutionary intellectuals who decided it was time for revolution. The party spent many years of slow, steady preparation, building the consciousness of the masses and even closely cooperating with the ruling Goumindang before the massacres. Revolution arose from the masses and was carried forwards by the Party, rather than arising from the Party and being carried forwards by the masses.

- Lastly, as Mao said:

All work done for the masses must start from their needs and not from the desire of any individual, however well-intentioned. It often happens that objectively the masses need a certain change, but subjectively they are not yet conscious of the need, not yet willing or determined to make the change. In such cases, we should wait patiently. We should not make the change until, through our work, most of the masses have become conscious of the need and are willing and determined to carry it out. Otherwise we shall isolate ourselves from the masses. Unless they are conscious and willing, any kind of work that requires their participation will turn out to be a mere formality and will fail.

How, then, was the "protracted people's war" applied in Maoist movements of the late 1900s, and how well does it conform to Mao's own definition?

**CHAIRMAN GONZALO:** With regard to violence we start from the principle established by Chairman Mao Tsetung: violence, that is the need for revolutionary violence, is a universal law with no exceptions. Revolutionary violence is what allows us to resolve fundamental contradictions by means of an army, through people's war... The way we see this question is that when Chairman Mao Tsetung established the theory of people's war and put it into practice, he provided the proletariat with its military line, with a military theory and practice that is universally valid and therefore applicable everywhere in accordance with the concrete conditions.

It was Lenin who did best show petit-bourgeois phrasemongering for what it is: subservience to failure. He states in *The Importance Of Gold Now And After The Complete Victory Of Socialism*:

True revolutionaries will perish (not that they will be defeated from outside, but that their work will suffer internal collapse) only if they abandon their sober outlook and take it into their heads that the "great, victorious, world" revolution can and must solve all problems in a revolutionary manner under all circumstances and in all spheres of action. If they do this, their doom is certain.

What grounds are there for assuming that the "great, victorious, world" revolution can and must employ only revolutionary methods? There are none at all. The assumption is a pure fallacy; this can be proved by purely theoretical propositions if we stick to Marxism.

What grounds are there for assuming that "the need for revolutionary violence is a universal law with no exceptions", as Gonzalo says? There are none at all. Violence is not a universally applicable principle capable of solving all problems. I think it's important to note the very clearly admiring tone Gonzalo takes towards violence, as if it's some sort of key he's found to all political problems. He shows this especially clearly in this following:

We see the problem of war this way: war has two aspects, destructive and constructive. Construction is the principal aspect. Not to see it this way undermines the revolution--weakens it.

How could such a blatantly untrue be argued? That war is principally constructive -- says who? What does war construct, aside from means of destruction?

War is loathed by the masses, both revolutionary and reactionary. That does not mean the masses cannot be moved to warfare, to civil war and revolution, or that the masses always reject war as a solution: but war is destructive, it has a destructive effect on social relations, leading them to revert to primitive forms, and to attempt to whitewash war as "constructive" is to demonstrate a serious disconnect between the petit-bourgeois intellectual Gonzalo and the actual proletarian masses; it's to display a view only able to be held by a petit-bourgeois who stands to gain from war.

The Maoist movement is mostly a movement of phrase-mongering, of sloganeering, of intellectuals flaunting obscure books by Chinese-

American professors at any curious onlookers and shrieking at them about revisionism.

## The Fruits of Maoism

Having investigated the theoretical positions of Maoists, we now must investigate where these theoretical positions inevitably lead. History has shown that, almost without exception, the Maoist movement has been thoroughly unsuccessful in every regard at realizing the supremacy of the proletariat.

Gonzalo and his Shining Path ended in failure. Gonzalo thundered about the validity of his conclusions on Mao's theories, and he would eventually find himself in prison by the turn of the 2000s, doomed to die in a cell (as he did fairly recently). The Shining Path exists only as various copycat groups using the old name. Among other terrorist attacks, the Tarata Bombing demonstrated the Shining Path's clear inability to reconcile the interests of the petit-bourgeoisie and peasantry with the truly revolutionary class, the proletariat. Similarly, the Lucanamarca attack showed the Shining Path was not the even party of the peasantry, but a party intending to subvert it. Guzman not only confessed to this, but defended it:

In the face of reactionary military actions... we responded with a devastating action: Lucanamarca. Neither they nor we have forgotten it, to be sure, because they got an answer that they didn't imagine possible. More than 80 were annihilated, that is the truth. the principal thing is that we dealt them a devastating blow, and we checked them and they understood that they were dealing with a different kind of people's fighters, that we weren't the same as those they had fought before. This is what they understood. The excesses are the negative aspect... If we were to give the masses a lot of restrictions, requirements and prohibitions, it would mean that deep down we didn't want the waters to overflow. And what we needed was for the waters to overflow, to let the flood rage, because we know that when a river floods its banks it causes devastation, but then it returns to its riverbed.

Gonzalo shows a complete absence of competence, of ability to self-reflect, a complete lack of ability to grasp that the action he committed not only did nothing advance the revolutionary cause, but landed him in prison and turned the masses against him, thus positively undermining the revolutionary cause.

In the end, Maoism has gotten us one thing – protracted war, in the most literal sense. In the Philippines, the CPP-NPA has been fighting their armed struggle for over 50 years, and are not an inch closer to power than they were when they started; indeed, they are further from power than they were back then. Their leader, Sison, who fled to the Netherlands in the 90s and has since been attending parties and book signings, directs the (overwhelmingly student youth) members of his "party" to commit acts of terror on the Philippine population *with open approval from the UN*.

In short, "Maoism" has failed to be a practical tool for the proletariat in any country where it's sprouted up, and has on the contrary served imperialism to quite some extent, often pitting self-described Maoists on the side of international capital and against their own countries' proletariat. It is clear to the class-conscious masses of the world that Maoism is little more than a new word for the same old clique of tired intellectuals, furiously and adamantly attempting to sell capitalism as socialism, to sell imperialism as sovereignty, and to sell the petit-bourgeoisie as proletarians.

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