

The Externalization of the Anti-Revisionist Struggle is the Negation of Proletarian Politics

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In reviewing the collapse of the New Communist Party-Liason Committee (NCP-LC), the Maoist Communist Group (MCG) has come to the realization that there exist fundamental political differences within our own organization.

The NY Branch has sought to promote its initial admonitions against patriarchal behavior, issued in 2014 as the correct basis for resolving the contradictions that surfaced in the LC prior to its recent dissolution. **1**

The branches in Boston and Virginia hold a fundamentally different position. Instead, we believe that the primary contradiction within the LC is internal to our grouping as well. A few members of the NY Branch suppressed discussion within the national organization on this matter. The prevention of internal debate has been justified by terming ideological struggle “excessively tedious,” and by saying it prevents “intervention in a timely way in a concrete situation,” presumably to communicate with the small group left following the dissolution of the LC. This argument violates the MCG’s stated emphasis on the primacy of mass work and principled ideological unity. **2** The NY unit has used bureaucratic maneuvers and other unprincipled tactics to suppress dissenting views. As a result, the VA and Boston branches are publishing a joint analysis of this situation, separate from New York’s.

Disagreements with NY revolve around the question of metaphysical purity. This is articulated along the lines of the male-female/mental-mental contradiction as the reflection of its material reproduction in thought. It is our view that NY is operating on the assumption that they possess the correct ideas congealed

in a relatively static “class position,” which causes them to repeatedly foreclose on criticism and the key principle of unity-struggle-unity.

The position held by the NY Branch is fundamentally incompatible with communist politics, and continuously impedes the key task of furthering the democracy of the masses. This concept is elaborated in the following two quotes that emphasize the imperative of continual ideological revolutionization and struggle against the reproduction of the patriarchal-capitalist division of labor internal to communist organizations:

“That is why today it is of fundamental importance for the leap to the Party to recognize that there is no separation between cultural revolution in the metropolises and civil war, neither temporally (that is to say as two separate phases), or spatially. Civil war and cultural revolution are two aspects of the same process: the total social war. It is by placing that consideration at the center of the activity of the Party that the correct basis is established for the construction of the system of red power and at the same time the war for transition to communism is placed on the agenda.”

-Walter Alasia Column of the BR, 1983. **3**

“Internal to the capitalist mode of production, the technical division of labor appears within the relations of production as a political separation between manual and mental labor, which is identified with and polarized between different social figures who contend with one another for power. We must conduct an incessant battle against this separation, against its residue in every militant, in every site of politics, every variable of the proletarian system of power, until the appropriation of consciousness, mediation and mental processing, can be produced as necessary and recomposed steps of the daily practice of revolutionary transformation of the present state of things.

Our criticism towards militarism, that it surreptitiously reintroduces the separate forms, on one side of knowledge-power (politicians, theoreticians, spiritual fathers..) and on the other side the combatant executives (the fighters) is not tactical but involves the foundations of the metropolitan revolutionary process.

The expropriation of knowledge from the proletarians of the metropole is much deeper than a limited education, because it [knowledge] states a decisive condition of their subordination. Knowledge is opposed against them as power, command embodied in machines, command hierarchy, the rule of the intellectuals and technicians and moreover the most perfidious form of the leadership of the ‘organic intellectuals’ and the ‘new political class.’

The reappropriation of knowledge is the result of revolutionary practice and no organization calling itself communist can underestimate it. The reconstruction of social individuals through the recomposition of their practice is not a problem to be solved in the future. It concerns us today and develops along with the process of revolutionary struggle, which transforms the objective world at the same time as it transforms those who carry out this transformation.

Communists and the development of communism are not two separate processes.”

–On A Discussion About “Subjectivism” and “Militarism” Palmi prisoners collective of the BR, 1980. 4

The Split with the LC:

Sectarian historical “reconstruction” in the struggle for clique leadership

The statement of the NY Branch of the MCG on the recent self-dissolution of the so called “Liaison Committee” is not a materialist analysis of the sequence of events in question. On the contrary, it is a sectarian polemic which serves to reaffirm the unchanging correctness of the static “pure truth” in the hands of a given faction (the NY Branch of the MCG). As a result, it obscures an understanding of the actual course of events in question. Contrary to this assumption of purity, it is necessary to affirm the universal application of the principle “one divides into two” without any exception whatsoever.

The primary contradiction driving the split of the LC from the New Communist Party-Organizing Committee (NCP-OC), which led to the formation of the Maoist Communist Group (MCG), was the refusal of the LC to accept the expulsion of individuals guilty of misogynist violence. This formed only the most apparent aspect of a fundamentally reactionary and patriarchal political and ideological line, which has now resulted in the implosion of the LC.

It should be noted that this runs contrary to the claims of the NY Branch. It is therefore necessary to clarify that the split with the LC was not driven by a contradiction between an idealist party building line (that of the LC) and a materialist party building line (that of the OC, as precursor to the MCG). Rather it was the case that at the time of the split both organizations had party building lines of a comprehensively idealist character, symptomatic of the weakness and disorientation of the proletarian left in our current national conjuncture.

For the LC, party building was to be accomplished by the rapid amalgamation of individuals willing to express a discursive adherence to the preexisting cut and paste “program” of the NCP-OC. This was to be accomplished via “spectacular” small group actions (such as the sporadic harassment of Petreaus at the CUNY campus) in combination with the use of social media to generate “hype.”

This deviation had its roots in the idealist “anti-economist” line of the RCP-USA which—instead of asserting the imperative of carrying out the fusion of concrete struggles for material demands with proletarian politics—preached a sectarian politics of self-promotional advertising at a distance from the real mass movement.

We must be clear here that, prior to the split by the LC, many of the comrades who went on to form the MCG were some of the most enthusiastic supporters

of the idealist practices of sectarian advertising occurring on the student front. We need only refer our readers to a careful study of the “left” opportunist formulations contained in the September 2013 text *From the Ground to the Sky* which was authored by comrades currently constituting the NY Branch of the MCG. 5

At the time, a “commando” action of a type familiar to those with a background in the “direct action” politics of the petty bourgeoisie did nothing to further the initiative of the masses at the moment. And yet, it was mischaracterized in this piece as a “qualitative rupture with the revisionist protest-structure, and beyond that, with existing social relations.”

The NY Branch is effectively maintaining that their (supposedly) unchanging and correct orientation upholds the synthesis of mass knowledge as the only base of a materialist unification process. Yet, *From the Ground to the Sky* closes with a drastically elitist and hyper-Leninist formulation:

“In order to begin the exceedingly difficult task of opening up a new revolutionary path, we must divide ourselves from all forms of so-called ‘spontaneous’ popular consciousness. The masses live in a society dominated by bourgeois ideology, and without proper leadership, they lapse into reformism. Our action of September 9 – and all actions to come – can thus only be understood in reference to a definition that is at the same time a directive: To be a revolutionary is nothing less than to be able to seize the future within the present itself.”

Implied in this statement is that proletarian politics are not based on the consciousness of the masses. Instead, the correct ideas are portrayed as coming from a party or political organization exterior to the masses and their struggles.

In opposition to this synthesis, we must assert that the correct ideas come from the masses, and that the role of the party of a new type is to concentrate those correct ideas and put them into practice with the masses. The goal of any Maoist political organization must always be the furthering of the democracy of the masses, and this can never be accomplished from a position of exteriority to their struggles.

The (May 2014) founding document of the MCG runs counter to this imperative:

“Our new name reflects the central task of the moment: ideological consolidation, and in particular, the forging of a principled unity regarding what we mean by ‘Maoism.’ Only in this way can we lay the foundation on which a Maoist Communist Party can be built...We are currently developing our political line on the national question and the question of women’s oppression, among other issues. We will carry out a conjunctural class analysis of the US in the future.”

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Here the central task is defined as a scholastic “ideological consolidation” isolated from practice in the mass movement. Despite the fact that most of the text in the founding statement consists of a ritualistic reaffirmation of the mass line, the concrete self-conception of the MCG at the time of its formation was a

negation of Maoist political principles in favor of an Althusserian revisionism of “theoretical practice,” at a distance from the mass movement. Ideological consolidation in isolation from the masses is abstract and only further reinforces the hyper-Leninist gap between cadre and the masses.

Thus when the NY Branch declares with reference to the collectives splitting from the LC that:

“They fail to grasp a simple truth: unity can only result from ideological struggle around summations of protracted sequences of real interventions in concrete struggles with clear material stakes against specific class enemies.”

They refrain from noting that we, as the MCG, shared in this failure for a protracted period following our own formation. When the NY Branch goes on to observe:

“It was only after March 2014 that the MCG was able to clear the path to the question of a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist party of a new type by engaging in protracted sequences of mass work in concrete struggles with specific material stakes.”

Here they fail to clarify that there was no break with idealism on March 2014. In fact the MCG at its founding was characterized by a unity of petty bourgeois intellectual sectarianism (NY) and right opportunist and economist mass work (VA). What changed in March 2014 was a break with open violent misogyny, which should be a minimum standard for any progressive-democratic, let alone communist, organization. It was not a rupture with idealist conceptions of party building. It is this wrong idea that must now be put squarely on the table to avoid endless repetitions of the same mistakes of history.

In short, the NY branch of the MCG continues to hold onto an idealist and bureaucratic conception of party building. This is evident in practices within the MCG, as well as in their mass work. It should be understood that there is a continuity of idealist and sectarian practice running through both the MCG (at all levels) and the LC, which has as its common root the shared experience of the NCP-OC. This continuity is a manifestation of an idealist epistemological deviation from which we must continually break if proletarian politics is to remain congruent at every moment with the communist objective: the furthering of the democracy of the masses.

The Personal and the Political:

The resolution of the gender contradiction is not achieved simply through the expulsion of open reactionaries

We agree that the policy line enunciated in the August 2013 text *Standards of Feminist Conduct* entails an important line of demarcation.⁷ All the more so in a context where many organizations in both the North American small group left and the international movement continue to operate according to a

discourse of “rectification,” which serves as a framework for the reproduction of male violence and female subordination internal to the communist movement. However, the implementation of such a policy cannot in anyway be equated to a decisive resolution of “personal problems,” as is alleged by the NY Branch in their document on the dissolution of the LC:

“Prior to the expulsion of the abusers and the departure of their protectors, the work of the organization was exhausted by internal struggles around issues of personal behavior divorced from politics and the mass movement.”

It is in the implications of this superficially innocuous formulation that we begin to approach the heart of the contradiction. The formation of the MCG is articulated as an absolute break with reactionary ideology embodied in the pair “patriarchal subjectivity”—“idealist conception of party building.” Once the MCG separated from the “impure admixture” represented by the elements who went on to form the LC, it supposedly became a pure repository of the correct line. An indivisible unity, a concentrated point of “qualitative rupture” able to “seize the future within the present itself.”

It can thus be seen that the NY Branch of the MCG is entrenched in an idealist deviation, in which it posits itself as the “correct leadership” of the masses and thus the source of pure “class ideas.” However, in order to maintain such a deviation, it is necessary for comrades in NY to distance themselves from the materiality of their own actions. This is accomplished by the NY Branch via the oft-repeated assertion of a separation between the personal and the political.

To claim that violence against women is a question of “personal behavior” and not a cardinal question of political and ideological lines is to negate the materialist truth well grasped by Marx and Engels that violence against women is the original and foundational class politics. Therefore a political organization that reproduces the oppression of women is not “divorced from politics” (which is impossible) but is actively serving the class politics of the bourgeoisie by reproducing the patriarchal inequality constitutive of bourgeois society.

The conception that the perpetuation of patriarchal relations internal to the communist movement is a matter of “personal behavior” which can be “resolved” by standards of conduct was aptly criticized by comrades from Germany and Austria when they noted:

“Those in the ‘left-wing scene’ who reduce the struggle against patriarchy to a fight against ‘sexism’ and who believe that it is sufficient to have codes of conduct, which say that as long as men do not watch pornography or beat women, everything is fine and women have ‘equal rights’ have understood nothing from the standpoint of Marxism and are in fact defenders of patriarchy, its apologists in the revolutionary movement.” 8

The male-female contradiction is not a “personal” matter, and therefore cannot be resolved simply by expulsion of the most openly reactionary elements. When “struggle against patriarchy” is only taken up in response to extreme incidents

of misogynistic violence the question of the liberation of women and destruction of patriarchy is effectively liquidated in favor of a revisionist political line. To imply otherwise is to negate the imperative of continual ideological revolutionization internal to political organizations in favor of the sanctification of the organization as an indivisible source of truth.

Against this, we assert that the one divides into two. It can never be assumed—as the NY Branch of the MCG does—that we have resolved the questions of patriarchy and party building. There is still patriarchy and there is not yet a party of a new type. Thus, these are still both open questions, to be posed to the masses (as opposed to simply being studied by petit-bourgeois intellectuals). As Maoists, we must always seek to further the democracy of the masses at all times, and thus the questions of patriarchy and party building must be constantly posed to the masses in relation to this task. This can never be accomplished through a position of (supposed) exteriority to the masses.

Against the apologist formulation of the NY Branch of the MCG, it is necessary to assert that the question of patriarchy is a cardinal question which divides the entire international communist movement, just as it divides the trends of thinking within every single militant, and this unity of opposites will continue until the male-female contradiction is overcome on the basis of communist relations of production.

Furthermore it is a serious deviation to consider that the question of reproduction of patriarchal ideology can be resolved by simply carrying out mass work among women, or ensuring the predominance of women in cadre structures or leadership organs. These measures are a necessary precondition for such a process of resolution, but are by no means sufficient. On the contrary, the question of the reproduction of patriarchal ideology is a fundamental one of style of work, methods of leadership, and division of labor and therefore inextricable from the struggle against idealist epistemology.

As comrades of the Turkish MKP have observed:

“Marx says the contradiction man-women is the essence of the general contradiction. The liberation of women progressively frees men and women up to the final stage, the liberation of humanity; that is why the women’s liberation movement is essential and indispensable for the revolution. The women’s movement has to be developed and organized at the ideological level as well as in its practical application.” 9

The Two-Line Struggle:

Against a metaphysical understanding of “class line”

All of this circles back to the supposed purity of the NY Branch. Our fundamental disagreement with them specifically pertains to the question of the consolidation of mass power. In their assumption of purity, they have prevented

expansion of the membership of the MCG, both by other branches as well as amongst the masses with whom they work. In doing so, they have attempted to preserve a supposedly pure core of cadre and a subjective hierarchy in leadership based on a metaphysical understanding of the concept of class line. Idealist deviations of this kind never work to consolidate mass power, but rather only serve the interests of the petit-bourgeois bureaucrats.

This idealist deviation is further evidenced by a near total lack of self-criticism by the NY Branch, and their tendency to foreclose on line struggles with other branches, over which NY asserts its command. Ideological struggle has been dismissed by the NY Branch as “excessively tedious” because—according to them—we already have a political line to which we supposedly all agree.

From this we have come to the conclusion that NY holds an idealist conception of political line that assumes that it only divides according to its being (the fact that there is a class line) and its application in a given situation. This is an instrumental understanding of political lines (based on an assumption of metaphysical purity) that fails to realize that a political line divides again in the situation—which is what we call two-line struggle—and in its very being—which is the impurity of any line whatsoever and the fact that they all must change in the process of political practice.

The NY Branch holds their supposedly pure “class line” in abstraction from the concrete nature of the class struggle. Against this deviation it is necessary to understand that impurity is absolute and purity is only relative.¹⁰ Hence every communist political organization must always serve the class struggle and seek, in all their actions, to further the democracy of the masses. Any recourse to a pure “class line” formulated at a distance from the masses can only serve the interests of a bureaucratic elite in the consolidation of their power.

The question of mass power, of the furthering of the democracy of the masses, must be posed at all times. It cannot be delayed until a later time, but rather must be the basis for communist politics as such. The putting into practice of communist politics is nothing less than this. And this must be done through the continual struggle—internal and external to all communist organizations.

The effort required to simply get the NY Branch to engage in conversations over these issues has drained the energy of other members of the MCG. It has impeded our ability to focus on political and ideological work amongst our branches. This document is both an attempt to expose clearly the key contradictions at play in the sequence “NCP-OC→NCP-LC→MCG,” and an attempt to prevent this dynamic from repeating itself within the emerging Maoist movement in the U.S.

We end with a final provisional thesis on the universal political importance of the Cultural Revolution:

The basic political question is how such a trajectory can advance towards communism with a protracted continuity. The question of

state power when it is posited in relation to the realization of the communist objective at every moment and not autonomized by a instrumental stage theory is a dependent variable in relation to this question of how to launch and develop this living identity of cultural revolution and civil war.

Endnotes

1 NCP (OC) “Self-Criticism and Summation on Patriarchy,” March 5, 2014. <http://www.signalfire.org/2014/03/06/ncp-oc-self-criticism-and-summation-on-patriarchy/>

2 “In order to forge a principled unity, we must—on the basis of a concrete analysis of the concrete situation—contribute to the political and ideological arming of the masses,” from “Founding Statement of the Maoist Communist Group, May 7, 2014. <https://maoistcommunistgroup.com/2014/05/07/founding-statement-mcg/>

3 Brigades Rouges (Colonne Walter Alasia) : Encore un pas ,Ligne Rouge no. 4 February 1984.

4 <http://www.signalfire.org/2015/11/28/on-a-discussion-about-subjectivism-and-militarism-1980/>

5 See “From the Ground to the Sky,” September, 24, 2013, <http://www.signalfire.org/2013/09/24/from-the-ground-to-the-sky/>

6 <https://maoistcommunistgroup.com/2014/05/07/founding-statement-mcg/>

7 <http://www.signalfire.org/2013/08/18/on-standards-of-feminist-conduct-cmlms/>

8 From “Towards March 8th! Fight Patriarchy and Imperialism!” Red Women’s Committee Hamburg, February 2016. <http://www.signalfire.org/2016/02/12/towards-march-8th-fight-patriarchy-and-imperialism-2016/>

9 See: “Honor to the Comrade Rosa, Leading Member of the Communist Party of Turkey and North Kurdistan (MKP), murdered by the Turkish fascist regime of the 16th of June 2005 with other 16 communist leaders and fighters,” Movimiento Feminista Proletario Revolucionario, <https://scioperodelledonne.files.wordpress.com/2013/01/2005-rosa-inglese.pdf> p. 21

10 “Inner Party Struggle and Party Development,” Hongqi, No. 7, 1976, <http://www.signalfire.org/2015/01/09/inner-party-struggle-and-party-development-chih-heng/>