

POLEMICS ON THE FAR LEFT

# Mao Thought and International Communist Movement

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A major deviationist trend within the international Marxist-Leninist Movement is the distortion of polemics of Mao tse Tung. The chief proponent of this are the Nepalese UPCN(M) and the Kasama group of USA. Mike Ely initiated the Kasama Project Group, a breakaway group from the RCP, USA. The Kasama trend almost reduces Stalin to a non-Leninist and all Mao's ideology as an anti-thesis of Stalinism. The Kasama project is one of the greatest ever Marxist-Leninist efforts to create a forum for debate, which has been lacking in the history of the Communist Movement, but they deviate from strong theoretical foundation. However its reading of Mao's cultural revolution and theories are virtually analysed as something different or separate from Leninism.

The other trend that needs to be combated is that of Maoist third worldism propagated by the Leading Light Communist Organisation (LLCO) that advocates that the entire first world working class is reactionary and only the third world proletariat is revolutionary. It also upholds Lin Biao's line as the revolutionary line as against that of Mao tse Tung. In fact it attributes the theory of People's War to Lin Biao. It slashes Bob Avakian from a left sectarian standpoint and even overlooks Avakian's positive points. True, it upholds Lenin and Stalin but claims that Mao later veered towards revisionism with Zhou En Lai etc. It terms some of the major third world Maoist struggles like that led by the Communist Party of Phillipines or CPI (Maoist) as that led by armed revisionists. In truth there is a significant connection between the Lin Biaoist ideology with that of rejecting the first world proletariat as a counter-revolutionary force strategically. Upholding Lin Biao's line is counter to the correct trend in the International Communist Movement. No doubt, Lin did propagate the People's War concept but it was fundamentally derived from Mao.

Significant points have been raised by this section on the class nature of the first world proletariat who reflect a general reactionary attitude and compared with workers of the third world countries live in relative luxury. However, one must take into account the anti-war protests of European workers and strikes combating the Imperialist system.

Both these trends are harshly critical of the RCP (USA) led by Bob Avakian but from deviationist perspectives. In fact the RCP took a progressive stand criticising the Nepalese Maoists' multi-party co-ordination and defended the vanguard role of the single proletarian party. While Kasama has taken several eclectic positions on Lenin and the dictatorship of the Proletariat. They see Maoism as something antagonistic to Stalin's ideology and even different from Leninism.

No doubt they foster a democratic spirit of discussion and debate and welcome a huge range of views but basically do not derive at a proletarian class analysis. RCP (USA) looks more progressive than the Kasama or the LLCO. Avakian makes some very valid points in democracy. True, the RCP has fallen victim to looseness in theory and practice and hardly drawn out a mass revolutionary programme for the working class. Nor has it given adequate support to the third world movements. A revolutionary writer Joseph Ball, a staunch opponent of the rightist trends within Kasama is sympathetic to certain aspects of the LLCO but also partially to the RCP. Ball was critical of the Nepalese Maoists' multi-party approach which Bob Avakian also opposed.

Personally, the author recognizes the disparity between the first world and third world proletariat but feels disqualifying the role of the first world section would be capitulation. True, the first world proletariat is complacent and much better paid but in recent times they have been affected by great level of unemployment, job cuts and also been launched into major strikes against globalization and anti-war struggles.

### MAO'S CONTRIBUTIONS

Mao tse Tung made a historic contribution to the development of Marxism-Leninism in the spheres of Philosophy, Practice and Theory. It was Mao who developed the first military line of the proletariat in semi-colonial third world countries through his work on protracted People's War. Since the Chinese revolution the peoples of the third world countries have launched heroic armed struggles either officially upholding the Maoist concept of protracted People's War or unofficially implementing it without officially upholding it. Mao developed the concept of setting up guerilla zones and developing military base areas. Revolutionaries are commemorating 75 years since the Long March, the greatest march in history. In the 1935 Tsunyi conference Mao's line won where the left sectarian line of Wang Ming and the right deviationist Chang Ku Tao were defeated. In the latter case the Vietnamese struggle against America is the best case. Vietnam won the war deploying the Maoist method of People's War without officially acknowledging it. Heroic Maoist armed struggles were waged in Peru, Nepal India and the Phillipines. Till the early 1990's the Peruvian Sendero Luminoso, almost in every way implemented the Maoist mass line in their main periods. Armed actions were the reminiscent of the Maoist led Chinese party in the armed struggle which threatened the very foundations of the autocratic Peruvian regime. The Phillipines Communist Party was theoretically the soundest making a historic self-criticism in 1988 through a rectification programme. They waged armed struggle since 1968. The Peruvian party had a long period of mass preparation before launching the People's War. Today the Phillipines movement has built up legal forms and liasons of struggle in urban areas.. In India in 1946-51 the mass line in Telengana was implemented but today in India there is an armed struggle with strong distortions of the mass line, however commendable or historic the effort. In Nepal at one stage sustained efforts were made which later veered towards capitulationsism. The Peruvian Sendero Luminoso led the greatest armed struggle since the Chinese revolution and took a military struggle to the greatest depth since the armed struggle of the CCP led by Mao.

Some forces like that uphold Lin Biao as the precursor of the People's War theory forget that it was Mao tse Tung who laid the foundation of this theory and Lin Biao only elaborated it. Overall what is significant is that it was Mao tse Tung's military theories as a development of Leninism that led to the building of popular armed struggles and even victorious triumphs in Vietnam against America and France. In the trends that deferred armed struggles and still built mass movements like that of Nagji Reddy in India, Mao's protracted People's War writings were a major factor. Struggles in Punjab are a major example. A very important factor in armed struggle was the leadership of the proletariat and the preparation.

Below are excerpts from two outstanding writings by Mike Ely on People's War and the fact that the proletariat led the Chinese Revolution.

There is a distinction conceptually between "people's war" and "protracted people's war."

Protracted people's war is a specific strategy of rural base areas, waged in semi-feudal countries. But Maoists have also discussed people's wars that are less "protracted" and that emerge from compressed insurrections in highly urbanized capitalist countries.

The word Preparation is a major leap: because it acknowledges that the preconditions for initiating a war don't always exist, and there is (of necessity) a preparatory period (preparing the revolutionary forces, and perhaps also awaiting particular objective conditions and crisis). Previously in the ICM there

were forces who denied (functionally) any need for preparation—and treated the initiation of people's war as merely a matter of will and the courage to decide.

It was tied to a view (promoted even by the RCP, USA) that the people of the third world were always (more or less) in a revolutionary situation, so that (even if there was a conjunctural element to launching armed struggle in advanced countries) there was probably not (in this view) much conjunctural element in launching people's war in a semifeudal-semicolonial country. In fact, there is both a need to do serious preparation (among the people, and in the preparation of the revolutionary core), and also a need for favorable objective conjunctures (involving both internal and external factors).

**Leadership of the Proletariat:** The fact that the Chinese revolution was a national liberation struggle and a radical anti-feudal agrarian revolution led by communists represented (in a real sense, at some levels of abstraction and mediation) a revolution led by the proletariat. In the sense that it was led as part of an ongoing process aimed for communism. That it was led by ideas and organisation uncharacteristic of the peasants, or the local merchants but that (in fact) were a product (and extension) of the most class conscious movements of the working class (and the theory that led them). There was always a concerted effort for this revolution did seek (whenever possible) to sink roots among the workers, and bring them to the fore as a class-in-itself becoming a class-for-itself. One early example of this was when the Maoist armies started taking cities —there were quickly line struggles over who to "rely on" in the cities: Some wanted to rely on the existing administration(i.e. take over the state as it existed, but run it with new methods), some wanted to apply the methods from the countryside (i.e. find the most radicalised poor peasants living on the fringes of urban life), and Mao argued (strongly) that the revolution finally had a chance to connect with, mobilise and relying the masses of working people in these urban areas (and that this focus had an important strategic component). For one thing the notion of "proletarian leadership" does not rest on the presence and initiative of people (literally) of working class origin—Mao and the other Maoists were quite conscious of wanting to make and strengthen that link, in order to strengthen the social basis for proletarian ideas within a movement (and within a country) of overwhelmingly non-proletarian classes. This same approach came forward in the GPCR, where the revolution was first triggered in schools among the youth (red guards) and among the soldiers (the publication of the Red Book), but where Mao struggled to bring the actual workers into the conflict (not just as fresh footsoldiers in a key social sphere, but as a potentially transformative force.)

**Cultural Revolution:** Mao was the first Marxist to recognize the need for continuing class struggle under the dictatorship of the Proletariat. And thus founded the theory of continuous revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Mao created the most democratic society in the history of mankind in the Chinese revolution from the Socialist to the stage of the Cultural Revolution. A very important aspect in this movement was the emergence and fall of Lin Biao. 3 trends in the Communist camp must be opposed. One of them rejects any criticism of the International line of the CCP-led by Mao. The other blames Mao for the 3 worlds theory and collaborating with Nixon. The last one upholds Lin Biao as the true proletarian revolutionary. It's a false view that Mao advocated the theory of 3 worlds but at the same time also be critical of China's inability to take strong positions against US Imperialism in the early 1970's with the silence on Chile the best example. Also, it is necessary to examine the weaknesses that led to the emergence of leaders like Lin Biao and the fact why the CCP remained silent about many of his errors till 1970 and only totally exposed his errors after his coup. Another important aspect was the personality cult created around Mao tse Tung which cannot be ascribed to Lin Biao. Mao himself has to be held responsible for errors. An important error was the CCP declaring in the 1969 Congress that it was the era when Imperialism was heading for a total collapse. This was somewhat corrected in 1973 when stating that it was still the era of Imperialism.

'The Cultural Revolution sets in motion the inexhaustible participation of the masses, which accelerates and puts into concrete form the appearance of proletarian democracy of which the Chinese speak. The moment the masses no longer fear coercion from the state apparatus, proletarian democracy begins to establish itself. It is here on the level of consensus, that the mass line conceived by Mao more than 40

years ago undergoes its broadest development. This unprecedented reliance on the masses might merely conceal a pedagogical and academic character were it not based on social practice, did not explode within the heart of the ideological apparatus?

One of Mao's most important points was, 'Grasp the revolution and promote production'. Mao always insisted that the contradictions between the forces of production and the relations of production, and their contradictions with the superstructure will continue to exist in every human society as long as production relations continue to exist. He also fought for revolutionary changes within the superstructure. In his essay 'On Contradiction' Mao dealt with the question of the continuation of revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Mao dealt here with the ultimate goal of reducing the power of coercive and ideological apparatus of the state—until the state withered away. By carrying the revolution to the soul by intervention of the masses in the Superstructure?

Different class and social forces were involved in the Cultural Revolution. There were the genuine Maoists in the party and mass organizations. There were anti-Mao groupings within the party who organized students, workers and peasants. And there were conservative military forces, ultra-left groupings, mass organizations that divided into rebel and conservatives camps, criminal elements, and others. Different social interests and motivations were in play.

### REASONS FOR SETBACK

At times, factionalism—in the sense of groups placing their own narrow interests above political principle—was a difficult problem to resolve. In the course of the Cultural Revolution, rightist and leftist groupings all claimed to be following "Chairman Mao's revolutionary line". In this complex and often confusing situation, party members and the masses of people could only distinguish between correct and incorrect lines—between the socialist road and the road back to capitalism—by engaging in political and ideological study, discussion and struggle. In many cases, disputes between leftist groupings had to be resolved by the intervention of the People's Liberation Army, which brought new problems. Further advances in the Cultural Revolution and consolidation of its achievements would have required a higher level of political consciousness and willingness to put collective interests first in order to reduce the level of unprincipled factional struggle. This very point throws the question whether again was Chairman Mao's line the only revolutionary line.

In spite of the August 1966 directive that the principal target of the Cultural Revolution was high-ranking party officials taking the capitalist road, intellectuals, especially those trained in the pre-Liberation era, were repeated, high-profile targets. At some points, nearly all teachers, writers and other intellectuals came under fire from Red Guard groups. Here Bob Avakian's concept of allowing for dissent under dictatorship of the proletariat is very valid where even rightist artist of intellectuals can express themselves. There it must be said that there has been a problem in previous socialist societies. There has been a tendency to see intellectual activity that is not directly serving or linked to the agenda of the socialist state at any given time as not that important—or as disruptive of that agenda. Now in bringing forward this understanding and pointing to these weaknesses, Avakian has been retracing the experience of proletarian revolution in the intellectual and scientific realms. In his reenvisioning of socialism, Bob Avakian has been emphasizing the role of dissent in socialist society. Avakian has said that dissent must not only be allowed but actively fostered, and this includes opposition to the government.

Red Guard groups and workers and peasants organizations, each claiming to be flying the "red flag," at times resorted to force during political struggle. This violated the explicit instructions of the "16-Point Decision," one of which was that: The method to be used in debates is to present the facts, reason things out, and persuade through reasoning. Any method of forcing a minority holding different views to submit is impermissible. The minority should be protected, because sometimes the truth is with the minority. Even if the minority is wrong, they should still be allowed to argue their case and reserve their views. Here the suppression of minorities is a very valid point. One of the shortcomings of the Cultural Revolution that was

most difficult to resolve was the inability of Mao and the leftists in the CCP to find the means to subject rightist commanders in the People's Liberation Army to mass criticism, to ferret out their connections to revisionist forces outside the army, and to remove them from power where necessary. This very point highlights the very lack of debate and democracy within the system and the excessive power in the hands of the PLA.

Quoting the MLMSRG: In the course of the Cultural Revolution, the development of new revolutionary leadership in the top levels of the party was incomplete and it was difficult to consolidate. The downfall of Lin Biao, Mao's official successor as of 1969, the removal of the majority of the original members of the Central Cultural Revolution Group, and the turn to the right in the early 1970s by many party leaders and officials grouped around Zhou Enlai made it considerably easier for Deng Xiaoping and other leading revisionists overthrown during the earlier stages of the Cultural Revolution to make successful political comebacks.

Some have argued that Mao was too lenient with Deng and other revisionist leaders. But it wasn't just Mao—the balance of power in the leadership of the party had shifted sharply to the right.

#### QUOTING THE LLCO

Mao's shift to the right following the Ninth Congress of April of 1969. Into the 1970s, Mao moved rightward in both domestic policy and foreign policy. When Mao turned to the right, he came into conflict with many Maoists. After the victory of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1969) and the Ninth Congress (1969), the Maoist prize should have been a return to the Maoist economic policies that had been defeated by Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping during the Great Leap years (1958-1962). The point of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1969) had been to reverse the creeping capitalism as the Maoist model was abandoned during the Great Leap years. Deng Xiaoping was brought back to power in 1974 to a top leadership role with Mao's blessing. Deng Xiaoping would later preside over the complete dismantling of socialism in the 1980s. Despite coming into conflict with the revisionists at times, Mao wavered and waffled. At times, Mao even protected the revisionists.

Even though Deng Xiaoping was removed from power more than once, Mao had protected him. For example, Mao personally intervened to separate Deng Xiaoping's case from Liu Shaoqi's at the height of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1969). Thus Mao saved Deng Xiaoping, allowing him to make a comeback. Mao failed to carry the Cultural Revolution through to the end.

#### ERRORS IN GLOBAL OUTLOOK AND FOREIGN POLICY

Errors were made in foreign policy and global outlook also. Mao correctly broke with the Soviet social-imperialists, in part, because the Soviets had become imperialist themselves and even begun to align with the Western imperialists. Yet, in the 1970s, the CCP found itself also aligning with the Western imperialists. This rightward turn was part of Mao's rejection of Lin Biao's global people's war outlook. Lin Biao was associated with the line that China ought to promote the global people's war led by Maoism. The Lin Biao line was connected to dissemination of Maoism internationally. Lin Biao's line put China at odds with almost every state in the world except revolutionary and popular ones. The Lin Biao line advocated fighting both Western imperialism headed by the United States and social-imperialism all at once. The correct Lin Biao line came to be seen as ultra-left by Mao. As early as 1969, Mao assigned people like Chen Yi and Deng Xiaoping to come up with a new line. Eventually the new, anti-Lin Biao line would recommend a tacit Chinese-US alliance against the Soviet Union, which the CCP characterized as "Hitler-like." This came to be justified after the fact by "Three Worlds Theory" of the 1970s (not to be confused with "Maoism-Third Worldism"). Deng Xiaoping was the main spokesman for this line and theory during the 1970s. Lin Biao's faction opposed this reactionary turn in foreign policy and global outlook. The endgame of the new, reactionary line was the full capitulation to imperialism that occurred under Deng Xiaoping in the 1980s. China, which had been a beacon for oppressed countries everywhere, now seemed to be selling out.

Lin Biao was guilty for promoting the personality cult. Lin Biao issued the Red Book as part of the Maoification of the PLA, without which the Maoists would not have had the power base to launch the Cultural Revolution. However, the cult is something that the entire Maoist left, and even the right and revisionists, were guilty of to various degrees. The cult existed to various degrees before Lin Biao entered politics and after his fall, when the Gang of Four controlled much of the propaganda machinery. It is fine if people want to claim that the cult was an error, but they need to be consistent about it.

The reality is that Mao himself gave his tacit support to the cult. Thinking that the blame for the personality cult can be placed entirely at Lin Biao's feet is ridiculous. Mao could have easily gone public with his criticisms, if he had them at all—yes, Mao circulated his "letter" that critiqued the cult, conveniently, after Lin Biao's fall. Let's be real. Mao could have announced his supposed criticism of the cult from Tiananmen for the whole world to hear, if he really wanted to. The most likely explanation is that Mao was well aware that he needed the cult as a battering ram against the Party and state, against the revisionists. Mao's personal authority, the cult, was used to mobilise the masses against the authority of Party and state functionaries. Without Lin Biao holding the gun, creating the protective bubble, and without Mao's personal authority, it is hard to see how the power seizures and mass movements would have been possible in 67-68. As far as mass line goes, Lin Biao, more than anyone else, spoke of "mass democracy" and "big debates." After all, Lin Biao was the symbol of the Cultural Revolution. The whole criticism that Lin Biao as some kind of Confucian elitist against the mass line is not tenable, and it is a criticism that can be made and was made of the entire Maoist bloc. It is a typical Zhou Enlai-ist-Dengist criticism to raise the flag of "mass line" against those who want to advance to communism. This reactionary line had *the effect of discrediting Mao-influenced movements worldwide?*

Mao's error was possibly not condemning the overthrow of Allende by America in Chile and inability to control the personality cult and excesses. The cult was not only the cause of Lin Biao but because of the nature of the struggle and problems inherent in the nature of the struggle. Remember it was the first revolution of its kind. Insufficient avenues or factions for debate and criticism were created but yet there were achievements in revolutionary democracy unprecedented in the history of mankind. The CCP needed to make its policies more open to the public. The 3 worlds theory was never propounded by Mao as RCP, LLCO and Kasama propound. The important factor is that Mao defended the vanguard role of the party. He fought for the Socialist line till his death. The fact that Lin Biao was elected as a successor shows the weakness of the then CCP in the mass line. The chief deviation in the reign of Lin Biao as a military commander was the excessive power in the hands of the People's Liberation Army and their deployment against civilians. Earlier Lin had made an important contribution in the Socialist education Movement and the building of the PLA. Maoist revolutionaries have to condemn Lin Biao's wrong political methods and conspiracy and remember the important mass revolutionary movement led by the Gang of 4 Criticizing Lin Biao and Confucius.

The very rise of figures like Lin Biao and Liu Shao Chi have to be studied. Just because Lin had such a leading position cannot credit him with the successes of the GPCR. Liu Shao Chi was head of the state from 1956 but his line was for over a decade opposed to that of Mao's. Later Lin virtually opposed the revolutionary committees and cultural Revolution Movements. It must also be mentioned that some of the greatest mass movements of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution took place after 1970 like the Tachai Commune in 1975. The Gang of 4 of especially Chiang Ching made some of the most extraordinary proletarian innovations in art, culture and politics. Other deviations in the Communist Movement are allying with the Islamic Jihadist forces in an Anti-imperialist front. The Gang of 4 displayed strong left sectarian tendencies towards the end and were unable to carry out the mass line in spite of making great efforts. William Hinton reported the left sectarian sloganeering of the Gang which even Mao was critical of. For one thing trends like Kasama and RCP wrongly blame Zhou En-Lai as an ally of the revisionist forces. In fact Zhou En-Lai was the only stalwart who stood with Mao till the end and there is hardly any evidence to substantiate his collaborating with Deng Xiaoping. The creation of factions and disputes makes this author question the need to perhaps accommodate other parties within a Socialist system. True, the dictatorship of the Proletariat has to be maintained and western multi-party democracy

opposes it. However it could be debated that a Socialist multi-party system could be created giving rights to allow other Communist parties or other parties to function representing the varying viewpoints of the proletariat. The Communist party would still act as a vanguard leading revolutionary movements allowing for other parties to exist. It may have taken a longer process, but still lay the grounds for a stronger democratic mass Movement with greater freedom of expression and views aired out more directly to the broad masses. One of the principal aspects of study was of the PLA and Lin Biao. The lack of adequate scope of democracy and debate and a huge personality cult built around Mao was the chief harbinger of that phenomena. Intellectuals, musicians and artists were wrongly persecuted. In the end several revolutionary Committees were disbanded and functioned as legal structures.

No doubt there lies a huge range of trends and debates but Marxism-Leninism and Mao tse Tung Thought is burning like a red flame. Whatever his marginal errors Mao tse Tung was the greatest revolutionary of his time and his contribution is on par with Marx and Lenin. New Left trends tend to de-link Mao's theories from Lenin and Marx and treat it as an independent identity which is a capitulationist trend. There are several deviations of right and left while People's Wars are not at their ebb. Other deviations in the Communist Movement are allying with the Islamic Jihadist forces in an Anti-imperialist front, which again hardly has any proletarian content. However there is a world economic crisis globally where ultimately the third world people will light the red torch and the crisis in the First World Countries will ultimately force them to join the third world Struggles. The Middle East is a very crucial issue where the proletariat has not taken the leadership. Polemically today the Communist Party of Phillipines, the CPI (Maoist) and the CPRCI (ML) are the most correct. In fact the RCP (USA) is more theoretically sound than Kasama Group led by Mike Ely. The most correct theoretical contribution on polemics was made by Harbhajan Sohi of India in his writings on 'Invincibility of Mao tse Tung Thought' and 'The Teng-Hua clique' .Significantly even in the early 1980's he was critical of RIM forces but still upheld the revolutionary aspects of the RCP and did not disqualify them from the revolutionary camp. □□□