

RGA Is Not an MLM Organization

2017-12-26 00:42:22 -0400

Introduction

A group in Austin, Texas calls itself Red Guards Austin. Over the past few years they have focused their efforts on distilling a somewhat edgy form of eclectic bourgeois expression that represents a blend of 4chan and Reddit trolling cultures.¹ This in itself is not so notable. It reflects a current of individualist ideology in the U.S. and is simply one of many decadent and vulgar aspects characteristic of the U.S. state and its ruling class. What is worthy of our attention is that RGA claims to be Maoist, or Marxist-Leninist-Maoist, a theoretical synthesis of the most advanced revolutionary struggles in history. Despite claiming to practice MLM, RGA has consistently put forward a negation of the basic principles of MLM. Therefore we find it necessary to publish a basic critique of this group, which is masquerading as MLM, in order to clarify the stakes and potential of this moment. The arguments put forth here should be easily grasped by individuals and collectives with a genuine desire to promote revolutionary developments given the challenges of our place and time.

Last year we published *A Course Correction for Maoism in the U.S.*, which was a summation of the lessons of several years of experience within the MLM movement in the U.S.² It was based partly on a process of struggle with collectives on the East Coast, but contained lessons that are valuable for the U.S. Maoist movement as a whole. Our hope, as we expressed in the document, was to have ongoing exchange with other collectives around the country, so as to develop political unity through struggle over key questions.

RGA—a group with which we had not communicated as they had ignored numerous attempts of ours to initiate exchange—claimed the piece was all about them. They released a public polemic against us only two days later, that argued for a total negation of everything in our document and included a bunch

¹4chan is an anonymous online message board known for its focus on cruel pranks and hoaxes, and in particular for its affiliation with the culture of the U.S. “alt-right.” Sometimes it is referred to as the malevolent offspring of Reddit, itself a message board site that fosters competitive posting of supposedly expert knowledge.

²See Mass Proletariat’s *A Course Correction for Maoism in the U.S.*: http://www.massproletariat.info/writings/2016-08-16-Course_Correction.html

of loose speculations about our group in their typical mad-dog attack style.³ Given the un-communist and baiting orientation of their document, we did not think it appropriate to respond publicly at the time.

It needs to be emphasized that revolutionary groups with disagreements, even very significant ones, can and should find principled ways to work together. Individuals and collectives that are guilty of serious errors in their work can correct them. This does however require a pro-people and progressive orientation, one that grasps the basis for the vast majority of the people to ultimately unite against their oppressors. Rectification of errors may require careful work over a long period of time. What may appear to be a primary error may in fact be secondary. Uninvited or misdirected criticism could possibly open up potential friends of the people to destructive attacks from enemies of the people. This is one of the reasons that we have suggested revolutionary collectives whenever possible establish direct and relatively secure contact with one another, principally to exchange ideas and experiences in the spirit of unity-struggle-unity.

RGA's approach in contrast has been to wreck groups that do not submit to their "authority." This is especially destructive, in both practice and as an example, at a time in which the U.S. does not have a revolutionary party. To build a revolutionary movement and the party of the working class, revolutionary minded individuals must seize the task of fusing with the masses and advancing mass struggles and organization in their workplaces and communities. In contrast, RGA promotes antifa work under its command as the primary task. RGA's quest to be a leading light of U.S. left mediocrity detracts from essential work, and their quagmire of petty-bourgeois politics masquerading as revolutionary can distract individuals who otherwise could and should be involved in revolutionary politics. In the last year we have seen no indication that RGA has, in theory or practice, engaged in MLM politics. The following sections analyze the non-MLM positions fundamental to RGA's approach. They are based on RGA's documents and public statements, which—consistent with the group's focus on online trolling and wreckerkism—display a fundamentally bourgeois "politics of purity" and posturing.

RGA Tailing Antifa

The ongoing oppression and exploitation of the people in the U.S. under our current form of bourgeois democracy provides the actual basis for unifying the masses in revolutionary struggle. To instead seek to unify people around opposition to the "coming fascist threat"—as RGA does—reflects the bourgeois premise that people will not be able to struggle together until they are confronted with an imminent violent threat to their existence. This is often portrayed in Hollywood productions in the form of alien invasions bringing at long

³See Red Guard Austin's *On Correcting Mistaken Ideas in Boston*: <https://redguardsaustin.wordpress.com/2016/09/17/on-correcting-mistaken-ideas-in-boston/>

last the unification of humanity. Proletarian ideology thankfully both requires and allows us to see a different picture.

Inside its borders, the U.S. state maintains a form of bourgeois democracy. This form of government does not provide democracy for the masses, who have little-to-no say about how the world and their lives are run. The actual struggle for political power is deferred by the ritual of bourgeois elections, which waste tremendous energy and potential that would be better spent serving the people. Serving the people means building revolutionary people's organizations that both serve the masses' actual needs and build their ability to fight against their oppressors. However, unlike fascism, bourgeois democracy does place certain limits on repressive powers of the state to arbitrarily detain and murder political threats, whether these threats be the masses who do not serve the profit interest of the ruling class, or revolutionaries who threaten the very system itself.

Reactionary forces can make the situation even more desperate for the masses than it already is, and more repressive for revolutionaries. Even under bourgeois democracy in the U.S., there are and have been fascist aspects to the state, including police brutality against oppressed nationalities in particular. The repressive arm of the state has historically been host to various forms of fascist ideology, for instance among the police and prison guards. And abroad, the U.S. state has consistently shown a willingness to kill without limit, which is itself an expression of a fascist logic. Despite these realities, we do not live in a fascist dictatorship, and it does not appear that this will change in the immediate future. There is a real difference between bourgeois democracy and fascist dictatorship. Under the latter, the masses do not have the freedom to meet, discuss issues, speak critically of the government, or protest injustices without fear of immediate imprisonment and/or death.

Those who are correctly outraged by the actions of U.S. fascists and their sympathizers, can and should see the connection between these reactionaries and the primary oppressive forces in the daily lives of the masses. While the fascists are still relatively small in number, there are over 750,000 police and correctional officers in this country who have a legal license to harass and oppress the masses with relative impunity. Therefore, it is incumbent upon anti-fascist and pro-democratic forces to direct their efforts primarily towards opposing these aspects of the U.S. state, and to not limit themselves to opposing emerging far-right political groups.

The liberal and petty-bourgeois politics that pervade many anti-fascist groups are actually an integral ideological aspect of the white supremacist capitalist U.S. state. By reducing white supremacy and the enemies of the people to the most extreme manifestation of openly fascist forces, they negate the importance of the daily struggles of the masses against many non-fascist—but still quite oppressive—reactionaries. This deviation must be combated as well. RGA reduces the class struggle to a binary and non-dialectical conflict between fascists and communists; in doing so they ignore the actual contradictions of our moment.

In order to build a principled revolutionary force and eventually a party we must join the daily struggles of the masses, and build the basis for mass leaders and proletarian struggle against the primary sources of oppression and exploitation in the U.S. For our collective, this has meant getting proletarian jobs and fighting for organization and mass struggle in situations where they do not exist but where a basis does.⁴ RGA instead sees antifascist organizing to be where the “real action” is.⁵ This follows from their conception that only antagonistic struggle is “real” struggle. It shows their deep-rooted petty-bourgeois impatience and glorification of violence. They are unable or unwilling to stomach the long and patient work needed to build revolutionary politics among the masses of people. RGA interacts with the masses not to struggle against the enemies of the people at this moment, but instead to convince them that instead the real struggle is against fascists who “promise [a future] more horrifying than anything we face today.”⁶

Marxists are not fortune tellers. It is possible that fascist rule will become dominant in the U.S. It is also possible that forms of bourgeois democracy may continue for quite a long time, and we should be clear that this form of rule is also capable of producing more and more horrifying futures. But either way, the development of revolutionary politics capable of overthrowing the state—regardless of whether it has a fascist or a bourgeois democratic character—is not predicated on us convincing the masses that they face an impending existential threat. Instead we must unite the people in the here and now against the dominant oppressors of the moment.

Following from this correct orientation, the path to proletarian revolution naturally entails violent and non-violent mass struggles as well as legal and illegal work. RGA is unable to grasp this, and instead engages in all sorts of double-speak to justify their opportunism. For example, in one recent post on their website, RGA states “Antifascism is first and foremost internationalism.”⁷ On the contrary, antifascism needs to be seen as antifascism. Antifascism can contribute to revolutionary internationalism, as it did in many ways during World

⁴See Mass Proletariat’s *Serve the People: Be One with the People*: http://www.massproletariat.info/writings/serve_the_people_become_one_with_the_people.html

⁵See RGA’s *On the Rise of White, Right Wing Terrorism in the US*: “Fascism must be resisted at all costs and we must build a popular antifascists movement—this is our crucial task” <https://redguardsaustin.wordpress.com/2017/06/09/on-the-rise-of-white-right-wing-terrorism-in-the-us/>

⁶Ibid: “While not every single one of us can be on the frontlines it is important that we all find our place in the struggle against fascism. There are so many avenues for us to push the message of antifascism. We must remain creative and interwoven in the fabric of the people’s everyday life. We have to build a culture of resistance and rebellion. Whether by words or by deeds every act against fascism is needed: do not shut up, do not back down and do not hide in fear. The future which they promise is far more horrifying than anything we face today. Take heart and do not let them have an inch. We will win; we have only two choices ahead, resistance or subjugation”

⁷See RGA’s *Statement of Solidarity with Front Revolutionnaire Antifasciste de Provence (Revolutionary Antifascist Front of Provence-F.R.A.P.)*: <https://redguardsaustin.wordpress.com/2017/11/21/statement-of-solidarity-with-front-revolutionnaire-antifasciste-de-provence-revolutionary-antifascist-front-of-provence-f-r-a-p/>

War II, through international solidarity for revolutionary forces who were often on the front lines against fascism. Such was the case among many partisan forces in Europe, and among the Chinese communists who were fighting the Japanese invaders.

But opposition to fascism can also harm revolutionary forces if non-proletarian politics are in command.⁸ The unprincipled united front policies orchestrated by the Comintern under Dimitrov and Stalin in the approach to and during World War II often resulted in a withdrawal of support from mass struggles. This occurred in the U.S. when—as part of the Comintern’s Popular Front policy—CPUSA de-emphasized support for, and ties with, southern black workers and sharecroppers, and instead focused on building influence among white liberals. This was also reflected in the CPUSA’s increased support for President Roosevelt’s reelection in 1936, and their decision to shut down the militant and widely read *Southern Worker* newspaper in 1937. Not coincidentally, in cities such as Birmingham, Alabama, a large number of black people left the party that same year.⁹

Later during WW II, the Comintern promoted the Nationalist Party (KMT) in China as the primary anti-Japanese force, and instructed the Chinese Communist Party to defer to the KMT. When the Nationalists launched efforts to exterminate the CCP and its supporters, the Comintern’s response was to encourage the CCP to “bargain” away its base areas in order to pacify Chang Kai-shek.¹⁰ Smartly, the CCP did not heed this advice, and Mao preemptively attacked Chang’s invading army. Subsequently, through its all-around correct political line, the CCP was able to unite all of China in resistance to the

⁸For an elaboration of an MLM view on united fronts at the present moment, see the TKP/ML’s document *Statement of Our Party, Communist Party of Turkey/Marxist-Leninist (TKP/ML) Regarding the Attitude Adopted on the ‘United Revolution Movement of Peoples’ Oriented to the International Fraternal Parties and Organisations*, <http://ikkonline.org/statement-of-our-party-communist-party-of-turkey-marxist-leninist-tkp-ml.html>

⁹See Robin Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, (University of North Carolina Press, 1990) 133-134.

¹⁰See Comintern letter to Mao, “Therefore, it seems to us that for the time being, you ought to follow a policy [that allows you] to gain time, to maneuver, and to bargain with Chiang Kai-shek in every possible way over the evacuation of your troops from central China and from Shandong Province ... It is essential that you do not initiate military action against [the Nationalist’s] expeditionary force and do not give Chiang Kai-shek an opportunity to portray you to Chinese people as the violators of the unity of the anti-Japanese struggle, and to use your actions to justify his attempts to sign a compromise peace with the Japanese.”

Mao’s reply: “Chiang Kai-shek is trying to push us out of central China and Shandong Province (where we have 300 thousand people, including 200 thousand troops and 70-80 thousand activists of different kinds) and make us retreat into Northern China. We cannot accept these demands of Chiang Kai-shek, since the Japanese are relentlessly organizing punitive expeditions in northern China ... There is no way we can agree to his demand that all our units leave central China and move to the three provinces of northern China, since we cannot put ourselves in a situation where we will be surrounded by a new wall of China, where we will have both Chiang Kai-shek and the Japanese confronting us, where we will be eliminated by them and thus give Chiang Kai-shek an opportunity to quietly capitulate to the Japanese ... before Chiang Kai-shek attacks us, we will begin a counteroffensive for defensive purposes in order to smash his troops and fortified zones.” From *Dimitrov and Stalin 1934-1943 Letters from the Soviet Archive* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000) 127-129.

Japanese invaders, and later achieved liberation of the entire country and the establishment of a dictatorship of the proletariat.

In contrast in Spain, communists, anarchists, and other Republican forces fell into pitfalls by seeing anti-fascism as their fundamental point of unity, rather than the liberation of the people from their oppressors, the latter of which in China was termed “New Democracy.” As Kang Sheng stated in conversation with Mao in the 1964 *Talk on Questions of Philosophy*:

I asked Spanish comrades, and they said the problem for them was to establish bourgeois democracy, not to establish New Democracy. In their country, they did not concern themselves with the three points: army, countryside, political power. They wholly subordinated themselves to the exigencies of Soviet foreign policy, and achieved nothing at all.

Mao replied: These are the policies of Chen Du-Xiu!

Kang Sheng: They say the Communist Party organized an army, and then turned it over to others.

Mao replied: This is useless.¹¹

Rather than understanding that antifascism can only be internationalism when proletarian politics are in command, RGA ignores these lessons from the history of the international communist movement (ICM) and instead consistently puts opportunism in command. Their uncritical support of the U.S. allied People’s Protection Units (YPG) in Syria, described later in this document, is a negation of the historical lessons which form the foundation of the MLM understanding of the united front. These verdicts were forged through life-and-death struggle on a global scale, and their reversal reflects RGA’s petty-bourgeois opportunism. Seeing only what exists, RGA is blind to the basis to build new power rooted in the struggles and emerging unity of working people. Instead, they imagine that a quantitative increase in the present array of antifa forces is the solution to our problems.

Instead of engaging in a concrete analysis of the situation in the U.S., and working to understand it in relation to past historical struggles in the ICM, RGA reduces the situation to a non-dialectical opposition between fascism and revolution. This metaphysical dualism is a negation of MLM and the dialectical materialist world outlook. Revisionists who put forward this sort of reductionist analysis justify it because of their supposed expert insight into a particular situation, and in doing so negate the importance of joining the masses in their daily struggles.

¹¹See *Talk on Questions of Philosophy*, (1964) from *Mao’s Selected Works* V.9, (Hyderabad: Kranti Publications, 1994), https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-9/mswv9_27.htm

RGA's Troublesome View of the Masses as "Those Without"

In *Condemned to Win*, RGA describes the masses as "those without."¹² This reductionist understanding of the masses as undifferentiated have-nots ignores the actual contradictions that exist among the people. MLM shows the basis to overcome contradictions rather than to pave over them. Rather than speaking of the masses as "those without," revolutionaries see the basis to unite the masses in the struggle against exploitation and oppression. Despite the fact that the masses come from various backgrounds and are subject to distinct forms of oppression, they have a shared material interest in overthrowing those who oppress and exploit them.

The daily experience of patriarchy, national oppression, and exploitation, as well as particular incidents of oppression and outrage, can help to clarify for the masses their interest in uniting and overthrowing their oppressors. However we maintain—in contrast to bourgeois academics and petty-bourgeois charlatans—that the subjective is the primary factor in determining class-stand. This understanding is a fundamental aspect of the proletarian world view. As stated in our *A Course Correction for Maoism in the U.S.*:

"The active role one takes in a struggle, or class stand, is not reducible to structural class. Structural class includes both social class (determined by relationship to class exploitation, national oppression, patriarchy and other factors) as well as class origin. This is a core tenet of MLM. Through understanding the primacy of the subjective in overcoming contradictions it becomes clear that class stand is primary. As Jiang Qing said in 1963: 'Family background makes an imprint on one's development, but it doesn't play a decisive role. It's one's efforts, the revolutionization of consciousness that is ultimately determinant.'"¹³

As illustrated in the previous section, Maoism provides a basis for revolutionary united fronts in anti-imperialist struggles. At times this can even include progressive elements of an oppressed national bourgeoisie. While this is not likely to be a key focus of revolutionary activity in the U.S. at this moment, positive work among the masses requires seeing them not as "have-nots," but

¹²See RGA, *Condemned to Win*: "The world has been divided into two hostile camps: the haves and the have-nots" ... "As the majority of the world's populations are forced to fight US imperialism at ever-increasing levels, the ruling class of the US must hide behind its own population, using the lot of us as human shields. The capitalist class finds it less and less possible to take care of its own working class." ... "This inability to provide basic necessities for the majority of the population is the basis for popular interest in revolution in this country," from <https://redguardsaustin.wordpress.com/2016/07/05/condemned-to-win-position-paper-from-red-guards-austin-2016/>

¹³Mass Proletariat's *A Course Correction for Maoism in the U.S.*: http://www.massproletariat.info/writings/2016-08-16-Course_Correction.html and also *Jiang Qing Receives Beijing Middle School Student Representatives to Discuss Class Line* November, 14, 1966, (): https://library.uoregon.edu/ec/e-asia/read/jiang_qing.pdf

as people divided by the class struggle, who have a basis to unite in principled resistance across various fronts. This is made possible by the masses' conscious engagement with revolutionary ideas. In contrast, RGA depicts the basis for revolutionary transformation to be lack of "basic necessities." This implies the masses are unthinking and mechanically drawn to and from revolution primarily by hunger and other associated needs. This is a negation of proletarian politics. Positing that there are those in this society that have nothing—and will hence join the revolution—ignores that fear of death alone is not enough to inspire the people to live, and that the masses are indeed capable of becoming the conscious masters of history.

In our current pre-party situation in the U.S. it is imperative that we not settle for half-truths and caricatures that obscure the actual challenges to creating a revolutionary culture and movement among the people. The majority of the masses are not going to advocate for revolution as long as they believe there are easier ways to struggle for their interests.¹⁴ For necessary ideological transformations to occur, we and the masses have to properly sum up defeats and victories, and show a basis for sustained material and political gains. In order to accomplish this, illusions about finding the "perfect revolutionary subject" must be cast aside. Any basic experience with collective struggle demonstrates that different sections of the masses will be drawn to the struggle at different times, and some will lose enthusiasm as others come forward.

RGA's Belief in Armed Struggle as the Primary Form of Expression

The importance of building unity through struggle underscores for revolutionaries that the primary expression of proletarian politics is determined by the needs of the moment. In mass struggles, activists go among the people to assess their various conflicts and contradictions. They facilitate the growth of organizational forms to build people's power, win victories in the struggle, and resolve contradictions among the people. This necessarily involves holding meetings, facilitating mass debates, and producing and distributing media. It also involves acts of resistance and rebellion that will likely have a semi-illegal nature from the start because of the nature of the U.S. state. Superficially, freedom of expression is guaranteed in the U.S., but in reality, when expression and protest hurt capital, the law will defend capital's interest.

¹⁴This was a reality that Lenin and the Bolsheviks clearly understood. Despite years of proletarian organizing in Russia and the successes of the February Revolution, in June 1917, only 13% of the Soviets—the most advanced and organized workers in the country at that time—supported the Bolsheviks. And this was in a situation in which many of the masses were facing starvation level conditions. It was only through principled revolutionary organizing that the Bolsheviks were able to win the majority of the soviets over to their side by the October Revolution. c.f. Lenin's discussion of this in ch. 8 of "*Left-Wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder*."

Which of these different forms of struggle is primary? Anyone with a proletarian orientation should respond that they all are—at *different times*. One part of the struggle cannot exist separately from the others. If one argues that protests, even of a semi-illegal nature, were not important because mass debates are the primary form of political expression, a revolutionary should respond that at a certain point we will have developed sufficient clarity to test our theories in practice. At this point the best and primary way to advance the struggle and advance the people’s cause is through acts of rebellion and resistance. If one argues that acts of rebellion and resistance are primary, and that discussions, debates, and ideological transformation among the people are secondary, even a toddler should respond that effective resistance is impossible without a process for the consolidation of the people’s ideas.¹⁵ RGA collapses a dialectical materialist view of this and other questions into a mechanical sound-bite, proclaiming that “violence is the primary form of expression.”

In their statements, RGA equates liberalism with reluctance towards violence, positioning themselves as free from liberalism because of their supposed seriousness about physical combat. Instead of meaningful analysis of the development of class forces in a given situation, RGA resorts to posturing, bravado, and machismo.¹⁶ Doing so is not helpful. It is a serious form of liberalism.¹⁷

Given RGA’s commitment to eclecticism, it takes some work to discern what the section in their position paper *Condemned to Win* titled “Armed Struggle and Violence as the Primary Form of Expression” is really trying to say. But after a thorough reading of their drawn-out and scattered ruminations, the content can be discerned: that the primary form taken by the political struggle of the proletariat *at all times* is armed struggle and violence.

¹⁵This process requires the hard and long-term work of joining and advancing the daily struggles of the masses against their actual oppressors. See Mass Proletariat’s *Serve the People: Be One with the People*: http://www.massproletariat.info/writings/serve_the_people_become_one_with_the_people.html

¹⁶See RGA’s *USA - Towards an ANTIFA of a New Type: Reportback from the Feb 13th confrontation*: “Connor [a local fascist] being the weak coward that he is made sure to bring his own bodyguard, who stupidly flashed a handgun but smartly failed to use it. Truth is our comrades on the ground were never unprepared for this to happen and he would have hit the ground before he pulled the trigger. When neo-Nazis draw guns aimed at antifascists in Austin, they will be shot down like their predecessors have been elsewhere in the past. We reaffirm the commitment made back in November that we will not tolerate another Greensboro Massacre or another Klan stabbing like in Sacramento.” <https://maoistroad.blogspot.de/2017/02/usa-towards-antifa-of-new-type.html>. Sadly, RGA embraces the same bravado that resulted in the 1979 Greensboro Massacre. Rather than seeing petty-bourgeois individualism and posturing as the central problem that led to the Greensboro Massacre, they instead embrace these aspects, and double-down on this “triumph of the-will” approach that led to a dead-end for the activists and mass contacts involved in the Workers’ Viewpoint Organization. For a helpful analysis of the Greensboro Massacre, see the Amilcar Cabral/Paul Robeson Collective’s *The Greensboro Massacre: Critical Lessons for the 1980s*: <https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/ncm-1a/greensboro/>

¹⁷“Liberalism, in the Maoist sense, means individualist or self-centered or petty-bourgeois behavior in contrast to the *appropriate standards of political behavior for a communist*.” From the *Dictionary of Revolutionary Marxism* on Massline.org: <http://massline.org/Dictionary/LI.htm>.

We should be clear: there is no possibility of peaceful transition to socialism. Any organization that promotes a strategy of peaceful “revolution” is deceiving the masses. At a certain point, our class enemies will use repressive force in their attempts to decapitate people’s movements. They have in the past, and will do so again. Even in the 1960s when seizure of state power was not on the near horizon, the U.S. bourgeoisie demonstrated its willingness to assassinate revolutionary leaders with a mass following, when they murdered Fred Hampton and Malcolm X, among many others. But mass movements are not built only with the “expression of armed struggle.”

Proletarian politics cannot be jump-started with gun-smoke and mirrors; they require working through contradictions among the people. This requires that revolutionaries join and further the daily struggles of the masses in workplaces and neighborhoods. This includes struggle for shorter-term gains which in themselves are not necessarily revolutionary, such as better working conditions, wages, or housing conditions. And it also requires advancing the longer-term interest of the working class in preparing for revolution. Neither of these aspects can be ignored. Providing proletarian leadership to the struggles of the masses strengthens their ability to sum up lessons and helps to clarify the need for revolution. These struggles also improve the material conditions of the masses.

As the masses’ power grows and organizational forms are consolidated in the course of ongoing struggles, proletarian leadership is able to concentrate the correct ideas among the people in light of revolutionary theory and practice. These ideas are then tested in struggle again by the masses. This process of “from the masses to the masses” produces an essential method of leadership which Maoists refer to as the “mass-line.”¹⁸ In contrast, RGA sees forms of focoism as the “secret sauce” which will catalyze mass rebellion.¹⁹ For example,

¹⁸See Mass Proletariat, *Summation of Recent Work*, February, 2017: “The mass-line we are describing was synthesized by Mao’s work in 1942, and is what allows the masses to truly make history, through spawning revolutionary power everywhere. In the present we can see this process occurring in the work of the Maoists in India. However, in the U.S. and elsewhere there is still a great deal of confusion over the mass line. The mass line is not reducible to improving our ability to serve the material needs of mass contacts, nor is it reducible to conducting agitation, propaganda, and education among the masses. Engaging with the advanced elements among the masses, winning victories in concrete struggles, and promoting proletarian subjectivity are all key preconditions to practicing mass line politics, and should be conducted by all Maoist collectives.” <http://www.massproletariat.info/writings/2017-02-02-summation-of-recent-work.html>

¹⁹See the entry on focoism in *The Dictionary of Revolutionary Marxism*: “A strategy for revolution associated with Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara, and formalized by Che and the radical French writer Régis Debray. According to this theory it is not necessary to wait until conditions are right to launch either an insurrection or else a people’s war (depending on the nature of the country). Instead, at least in oppressed Third World countries, a dedicated band of revolutionaries can launch very small-scale, roving semi-guerrilla warfare at any time, which will supposedly serve as a focus (Spanish:foco) and inspiration for the rapid growth of more general guerrilla warfare and/or at some relatively early time a general uprising capable of seizing political power. The theory is that these paramilitary roving bands can themselves create the necessary conditions for revolution through their vanguard actions and moral example.

Unlike genuine people’s war, the foco theory is based on the assumption that a band of heroes can create a revolution, and that the mere existence of the foco makes it a vanguard

they state:

“We must accumulate forces and steel them in small-scale street battles ... We are at war and we always have been—it is time we behave like soldiers. We are guided by the promise of communism. The world is in chaos, and we must choose either the socialist future or the barbarism of extinction, and this is what it means to live in the age of the strategic offensive.”²⁰

Although they will likely employ various sophistries and unprincipled attacks to deny it, this strategy of “small-scale street battles” is ultimately a focoist one. RGA claims that a present “age of strategic offensive” justifies this approach. Their use of the term is derived from the Communist Party of Peru’s (PCP) 1980 declaration celebrating the initiation of armed struggle in the country, stating, “We are entering the strategic offensive of world revolution. In the next 50 to 100 years, the domination of imperialism and all exploiters will be swept away. History cannot go backwards.”²¹ The PCP made this claim despite the counter-revolution in China in 1976, and other key setbacks in the ICM.

One could interpret RGA’s claim to mean that a “strategic offensive” exists in the context of the U.S. However, it should be emphasized that strategic offensive in MLM theory generally refers to a stage in protracted people’s war (PPW) when revolutionaries have achieved country-wide superiority over reactionary forces both politically and militarily through effective encirclement. Leaving aside the question of whether PPW is an appropriate strategy for revolution in an imperialist country,²² it should be clear to anyone with even a basic familiarity of the objective situation in the U.S. at present and the history of various PPWs that we are not in a position of strategic offensive. We should be clear that revolutionaries are a very small minority in this country, and mass struggles are in a relative ebb. Describing our situation as one of strategic offensive is either a dangerous delusion on the part of RGA, or just another instance of their sophistic machismo.

Rather than dealing with the actual contradictions that the masses face, RGA, in classic focoist form, promotes hollow morale-boosting as the answer to the present low-level of mass organization. Ill-defined rallying calls about “street battles” and the “age of the strategic offensive” encourage others to chase the form of appearance of proletarian power. Instead, we must focus on truly serv-

without any necessity to merge deeply with the masses, forge close ties with them, participate seriously in their own struggles, and actually lead the masses in their own struggles. Foco theory, or focoism, is therefore a strongly elitist theory of revolution.” at <http://massline.org/Dictionary/FO.htm>

²⁰From RGA, *Everywhere a Battlefield*: <https://redguardsaustin.wordpress.com/2017/08/27/everywhere-a-battlefield/>

²¹Communist Party of Peru, *We are the Initiators*, (1980): <http://bannedthought.net/Peru/CPP/Misc/WeAreTheInitiators-1980.pdf>

²²c.f. our forthcoming document on the question of the universality of PPW. The document will describe examples of how several groups who claim to uphold the universality of PPW actually negate the concrete content of this revolutionary strategy.

ing the needs of the masses in the course of struggle. This means addressing contradictions that prevent the masses from unifying as well as advancing the material interests of the masses through struggle. Those who see armed conflict and street battles as “primary” at this moment in the U.S. will be avoided by positive elements among the masses, who at present do not even possess the most basic organizations to support their struggles against the outrages and injustices they face every day. Instead of addressing this glaring reality, RGA fantasizes that armed struggle is the key way forward.

RGA justifies this by claiming that the proletariat resolves basically all of its disagreements with antagonistic struggles, and that “we are at war and always have been.”²³ While RGA perhaps understands that the U.S. state uses constant repression—including violent repression—to keep the masses in place, from this they mistakenly conclude that organized violence is the primary way, *at all times*, to organize the resistance of the people. In contrast, the history of the ICM has shown that resolving contradictions among the people is often primary in building the basis for organization and rebellion. Because contradictions among the people are fundamentally non-antagonistic they cannot be worked through by violent displays. Such an approach has little chance of advancing either the material interests or the organizational unity of the people.

RGA justifies this approach to resolving contradictions among the people by claiming that “most appealing to the working class is physical violence. In popular neighborhoods, most serious disputes are solved by violent means.”²⁴ This claim is absurd to anyone who has spent significant time among the working class. The vast majority of disputes among working people are resolved by non-antagonistic and non-violent means. Some of the more common exceptions to this are violence by patriarchal abusers and lumpen or semi-lumpen elements. But RGA is not interested in investigating the situation of the working class, just as they have no interest in learning lessons of the ICM which form the foundation of MLM. They would much rather come up with half-baked speculations to justify their focoist politics and machismo posturing.

Historically, focoist deviations have arisen at higher levels of political development, and have represented real roadblocks to revolutionary advance. Mao thoroughly repudiated Lin Biao’s embrace of such a strategy as early as 1930. At this time, Lin Biao was unable to grasp that building political power through mass-struggles in Jiangxi and in other regions would lay the basis for mass victories and an eventual revolutionary high-tide. Lin instead favored a strategy of “roving guerrilla actions” to galvanize public opinion in favor of revolution.²⁵

²³From RGA, *Everywhere a Battlefield*: <https://redguardsaustin.wordpress.com/2017/08/27/everywhere-a-battlefield/>

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Mao’s 5 January 1930 “Letter to Comrade Lin Biao” translated in *Mao’s Road to Power: From the Jinggangshan to the Establishment of the Jiangxi Soviets July 1927-December 1930*, Vol. 3 (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), 234-247. For an analysis of questions related to the particularity of our situation compared to that of China during struggles to achieve red political power, see our forthcoming document on the subject of protracted people’s war.

But in order to actually develop proletarian politics, revolutionaries must build organizations and mass leadership that serve the needs of the people so that an ever larger number of the masses can take up proletarian politics in a collective manner. Opposing the focoism of groups like RGA does not mean adopting the approach of revisionist reformers, as should be clear from Mao's critique of Lin Biao's adventurism. On the contrary, revolutionary political work requires constantly creatively seizing on openings to unite the masses in struggle against the specific class enemies oppressing them in their daily lives. Strikes, occupations and other forms of protest must be planned and advanced non-mechanically, in ways that can cut through a dominant logic in our society that tells the people the only way to succeed is to keep their heads down and to defer to authority. Breaking through this logic requires constant and hard work among the people by dedicated revolutionaries. It is only in this manner that we can further mass struggles against oppressors while also building the foundation of a proletarian power capable of changing the world.

In contrast, RGA prefers to live-action-role-play and posture online. In our work, we have seen that the masses are no strangers to violence, and are well acquainted with the violence of gangs, the police, and abusive familial relationships. What the masses lack is not violent "expression" but rather forms of proletarian organization that suit the actual needs of class struggle here and now. There is no road to the formation of a revolutionary party—tragically lacking in the U.S. for decades—that does not pass through the tortuous path of the people's struggles.

However when RGA has met groups actually trying to tread this road, they have tried to boss them into submission. The experience of the Portland Maoist Group (PMG) is a case-in-point. We think it important to quote Portland's description of their RGA horror story in full:

Our member who was an attendee of [RGA's] cadre school returned with directives from RGA that were concealed from the rest of [our] group. The directives were to become leadership and to covertly force a member they had problems with, in part due to that member's diagnosing of certain RGA members' racism, out of the group. There was an expectation of weekly report-backs to RGA about our group by this comrade while they simultaneously neglected the rest of the group. [RGA was] not seeking to communicate with this comrade as a representative of [our] organization, but as someone loyal to the RGA.

When they felt the need to finalize the severing of their relationship with the rest of the group [RGA] advised this comrade to leave the group, gather new Maoists and form their own collective, with the intent that the new collective would be more loyal to them and the assumption that the existing group would collapse. This can be understood as wreckerism. Trying to get multiple people at different times to leave the group, for unprincipled reasons, one time with the

hope of it collapsing, is uncomradely meddling.²⁶

Portland's experience is symptomatic of the terrible impact RGA's negation of MLM has had on potential revolutionaries. This approach will also lead to total disaster if applied to mass struggles. In such a case, this commandist conception of organization building will stifle mass initiative spare that of a self-imposed central "leadership" isolated from the masses. This is in contrast to the mass-line method of leadership described above.

RGA's effort to coerce PMG into submission is the stuff of vile revisionism and an absolute rejection of fundamental Maoist principles. So too is the defense of one's authority and "leadership" based on "willingness for violence." Upholding such violent expression as primary does not provide a shortcut to revolutionary advance. It actually negates revolutionary advance altogether, as can be seen in the myriad forms of Brezhnev-type armed revisionism and adventurism of groups such as the Red Brigades and Red Army Faction.²⁷

RGA's Rejection of Criticism of Patriarchy and Other Democratic Exchange Outside their Approved Organizations

In contrast to these previous examples, principled proletarian struggle opens up the world of revolutionary strategy to the masses, providing the basis to carry on the struggle up to and beyond the violent seizure of state power. A proletarian approach requires embracing and encouraging correct ideas and criticism, no matter the source. As Mao stated, "If we have shortcomings, we are not afraid to have them pointed out and criticized, because we serve the people. Anyone, no matter who, may point out our shortcomings. If he is right, we will correct them. If what he proposes will benefit the people, we will act upon it."²⁸ A proletarian outlook can and does embrace correct ideas, even those from our enemies, and even when those correct ideas are packaged inside incorrect ideas and causes. Through analysis of and struggle over a situation, an understanding of reality is advanced, and this cannot be harmful to the proletarian struggle. This is why Mao explained in *On Practice* that dialectical materialist philosophy serves the interests of the proletariat, and that this is one of its outstanding characteristics.²⁹ On the other hand, it is ultimately in the interest of the

²⁶From Portland Maoist Group, *Summation of Our First Year*: <https://portlandmaoistgroup.wordpress.com/2017/03/05/summation-of-our-first-year/>

²⁷Following Khrushchev's "peaceful revisionism" Brezhnev started pushing revisionist politics more militarily internationally.

²⁸Mao, "Serve the People" from *Selected Works* V. 3. https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3_19.htm

²⁹See Mao's essay *On Practice: On the Relation Between Knowledge and Practice, Between Knowing and Doing*: "The Marxist philosophy of dialectical materialism has two outstanding characteristics. One is its class nature: it openly avows that dialectical materialism is in the service of the proletariat. The other is its practicality: it emphasizes the dependence of theory on practice, emphasizes that theory is based on practice and in turn serves practice. The truth

bourgeoisie to distort reality, in order to conceal the root contradictions in society.

In line with their bourgeois view of politics, RGA turns Mao's writing into its opposite, and denounces criticism against patriarchy and other oppression as invalid if it is derived from a "call-out-culture" outside of their organization, stating:

Call-out culture is based on a subjectivism: individualism. It looks for targets instead of investigating reality in its full and difficult complexity, and so it jumps to conclusions and inevitably mistakes friends for enemies. The communist method of placing criticism is truly proletarian as it understands that the whole is greater than the part, the collective is greater than the individual, and the masses themselves are the real heroes. To overcome this subjectivism, one must have a good understanding of the dialectical relationship between theory and practice, as laid out by Mao in *On Practice*.³⁰

In contrast to RGA's views, aspiring revolutionary collectives cannot be seen as the source of correct ideas. Instead they must be seen as always divided by the class struggle—and constituted of both positive and negative ideas. The parts need to be seen as primary in advancing the interest of the whole, and the whole does not exist separately from its parts. These parts consist both of individuals inside a collective, and mass links outside of it. The whole consists of these parts and of the ideas and actions that push the struggle forward. In the case of revisionists like RGA, reference to the whole is used to negate the contradictory reality of the parts, and to silence needed criticism. In doing so, they effectively repeat the refrain of the worst elements of the so-called left that dominate activist circles in the U.S., which justify all sorts of terrible petty-bourgeois practice as "better than nothing."

RGA claims that a supposed Marxist expertise is needed to offer communist criticism and to "overcome subjectivism." This negates the reality that the masses do often possess correct ideas and can and should voice these ideas, including criticisms of revolutionary collectives and of individuals. RGA however dismisses "untrained" criticism as by default being expressions of "bad faith."³¹ This is analogous to those who broadly denounce the #MeToo trend of calling out patriarchal abuse. Needless to say, both of these dismissals cannot but

of any knowledge or theory is determined not by subjective feelings, but by objective results in social practice." https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1_16.htm

³⁰RGA, *On Identity Opportunism*: <https://redguardsaustin.wordpress.com/2017/04/10/on-identity-opportunism/>

³¹Ibid: "The nature of this society is rooted in capitalist exploitation, so the default attempts at self-criticism from untrained cadres will take on this performative character out of an assumed peer pressure and a social tendency of bad faith in the critic as well as a lack of faith in the process of criticism. People engaging in this error have sold themselves (and their comrades) short and will stay in the filth of narrow self-interest unless rupture with the bourgeois self takes place"

serve to silence needed call-outs. Criticisms may be incorrect. But this can be ascertained only by inviting criticism and discussion, and not by outright rejecting criticism from non-members as hopelessly contaminated by bourgeois society.

RGA justifies this position by reference to their supposed status as the righteous initiators of revolutionary violence. We find it important to quote a full section from their document *On Identity Opportunism* to more completely expose its noxious logic:

A communist must regard the masses with faith and confidence, bringing them forward instead of pressing unrealistic and incoherent codes of conduct from above. Society is transformed by violent revolution against the economic base and is continuously transformed afterward by continued revolution in the superstructure in the form of cultural revolution. We have seen the backward brought up by world historic revolutions—for instance peasant men in China who promoted foot-binding ending up joining the Red Army.³² We are correct to assume that their methods of communication were also “problematic,” yet as communists the CCP did not write off or isolate the peasantry as a social base for revolution—if they had there would have been no revolution and the imperialists and capitalists would have prevailed far sooner. This hair-splitting inevitably treats the masses as enemies and fails to understand the relationship between culture and capitalism-imperialism. Whether they admit it or not, they act as though it is possible to transform society without armed struggle and without the participation of the masses. They do not seek unity and it is “not their job to educate” the masses.³³

Here RGA conflates what has been discussed in their document so far—criticism of individuals in political organizations and movements for patriarchal and other oppressive tendencies³⁴—with a denouncement of the masses as “enemies” and a denial of the masses’ potential to form a “social base of revolution.” In doing so, they are effectively saying that to criticize an individual or a group for

³²Foot-binding was a deeply patriarchal practice that involved the breaking of the bones in young women’s feet in order to make the feet smaller, a trait considered to make them more desirable for marriage. The procedure effectively crippled women, and made walking difficult. The communists campaigned strongly against this misogynist and abusive ritual. See Chairman Yang of the communist Shanxi-Hebei-Shandong-Henan Border Region Government during the Anti-Japanese War of Resistance stating: “In 1942 we abolished foot binding. We issued an order and adopted a slogan: ‘Emancipate feet.’ The family of any woman with bound feet was fined. Such bureaucratic methods were not effective. So we canceled the order and adopted propaganda methods and the people emancipated their feet by themselves,” from Jack Belden, *China Shakes the World*, (Beijing: New World Press, 1989), 82.

³³RGA, *On Identity Opportunism*: <https://redguardsaustin.wordpress.com/2017/04/10/on-identity-opportunism/>

³⁴Ibid: “Call-out culture attacks individuals and not the ideas in their heads, seeking only scapegoats and not actual, nuanced explanations for shortcomings in the movement, and thus it relies on half-truths and lies.”

being patriarchal is to dismiss the potential of the proletariat or peasantry to be a revolutionary force. This heinously conflates those who affiliate with a given political organization as being “the whole of the masses” rather than what they are in the best of circumstances—parts of the masses, and representatives and advocates of the larger mass struggle. Relatedly, this ignores the need for activists to transform themselves in the course of struggle.

But RGA is arguing that there is no basis to transform mass activists until after “society is transformed by violent revolution against the economic base.” They thereby deny that there is a basis to struggle to transform the consciousness of the masses of people here and now. Of course, things open up to a far greater degree after the seizure of state power and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. But to claim, as RGA does, that no real change in orientation is possible for groups or individuals until after the seizure of state power is metaphysics. This is exemplified by RGA’s statement that “Society is transformed by violent revolution against the economic base and is continuously transformed afterward by continued revolution in the superstructure in the form of cultural revolution.” They see the struggle to transform the economic base and the struggle to change the superstructure as separate and isolated! But basic Marxist texts and revolutionary history show us that there is a dialectical relation between the superstructure and the base. This means that we have to both promote proletarian consciousness and transform economic relations in the course of making revolution, as well as after a successful revolution. RGA’s metaphysical view serves to justify dismissal of any and all criticism of backward tendencies in their organization.

The example RGA uses from China exposes their use of double-speak to defend their opportunism. RGA upholds the initial existence of patriarchal ideas among activists who joined the CCP as a reason to reject criticism of activists in the present. In the process, RGA portrays criticisms of political activists as equivalent to a chauvinist practice of criticizing the masses as a whole. Let’s be clear—there were men and women who joined the Chinese communists with various bad ideas. The same applies to those who join political organizations now. However, the CCP strongly emphasized the need amongst both its cadres and mass organizations to struggle against wrong ideas and attitudes, both before and after the seizure of state power. This did not mean encouraging intellectuals from the cities to trek to rural villages to yell at village people for being backward. It meant embracing and encouraging communication with people outside of the party, including those among the masses with serious differences with the party’s approach. It also entailed seeing the need for individuals both within and without the organization to transform accordingly, and to avoid justifying existing practice as beyond criticism.³⁵

³⁵“By combining ‘correct theory and practice,’ [one] can transform himself, as one can see in the common Chinese word *fanshen*, which may be freely rendered as “transformation of identity.” The Chinese communists thus believe that the arena of class struggle cannot take place abstractly within the class a whole, but must be fought for within each individual human being,” from Franz Schurmann, *Ideology and Organization in Communist China*, (Berkeley,

The implications of RGA's approach are deeply concerning. It effectively serves as a justification for protecting anti-people practices among its cadres because there are oppressive tendencies among the masses. This condemns both cadres and the masses to the existing state of affairs rather than seizing the need and basis for people and organizations to struggle to transform in the present. There are many members of the masses who are looking for progressive ways to struggle against patriarchy, national oppression, and the system of capitalist exploitation more broadly. Revolutionaries must work to unite people along these lines. But RGA is uninterested in this task and instead seeks to unite people around their principle that the primary form of political expression is violence. This will most likely result in them tailing some of the most backward tendencies among the masses.

For example, while no member of the masses is pure and without negative ideas, there is a difference between a member of the masses with some patriarchal ideas and a person who is dominantly oriented towards male-chauvinist tendencies. Uncritically accepting and accommodating such individuals because they agree with the need for violence will undoubtedly discourage many people from getting involved in politics. Despite RGA's nominal adherence to proletarian feminism, their politics and statements display an extreme degree of male-chauvinism.

RGA's conclusions shows they have not substantially broken from the negative tendencies of the New Communist Party-Liaison Committee (NCP-LC), which collapsed under a heap of bad theory and practice. The "leadership" of this organization defended patriarchal abusers and rejected democratic criticism—both from their cadre and from outside the organization—that could have prevented this and other egregious errors. The group's leadership justified this practice because of their belief, analogous to that of RGA, that such mistakes were "proletarian" or "where the masses were at" and hence tolerable.³⁶

The MLM understanding of criticism from within and without the organization enables collectives to properly overcome contradictions and take seriously the ideas of the masses. What initially appear as a secondary contradiction may in fact be, or may become, primary, and for this reason it is important to proactively work to handle secondary contradictions from the outset. It is essential to investigate and preserve minority opinions in a collective as well, a practice the CCP encouraged at all levels.³⁷ Calling-out abuse and abusers, as well as articulating even partially-formed criticisms against potentially wrong ideas and approaches is essential to this process, especially among the masses

UC Press, 1966), 32.

³⁶For a discussion of some aspects of the politics behind the collapse of this formation and the related NY-Maoist Communist Group, see Mass Proletariat's *The Externalization of the Anti-Revisionist Struggle is the Negation of Proletarian Politics*: <http://www.massproletariat.info/writings/2016-06-15-The-Externalization.html> and *Self-Criticism: Unprincipled Struggle and 'The Externalization' Piece*: <http://www.massproletariat.info/writings/2016-07-19-externalization-critique.html>

³⁷See Franz Schurmann, *Ideology and Organization in Communist China*, (Berkeley, UC Press, 1966), 55-57.

and emerging activists. RGA instead discourages any and all criticism until one has a “good understanding of the dialectical relationship between theory and practice.”³⁸ This is the bourgeois view of politics in which only the ideas of anointed “experts” matter, and no one else has the right to speak or question these so-called experts. In RGA’s view their supposedly superior practice justifies a commandist approach to politics and gives them immunity from criticism. Their view is non-dialectical. Those who have spent time in “collectives” where patriarchy and individualism reigns supreme will be familiar with RGA’s effectively hollow and pernicious claim that their “politics of the deed” supposedly justifies all. The “Maoist logo” that RGA has slapped on top of this politics is an insult to genuine Maoist revolutionary theory and practice.

RGA’s Support for the YPG

Such defense for oppressive individuals and social forces is not limited to RGA’s own immediate allies and accomplices. RGA has extended this logic to expressing unabashed support for the People’s Protection Units (YPG) in Syria, an avowed surrogate for U.S. imperialist intrigue in the region.³⁹ Such treachery is veiled by RGA’s argument that the YPG fights against ISIS, and the assumption that the enemy of my enemy is my friend.⁴⁰ This sort of reductionist logic is best left to bourgeois politics. Maoism is built on concrete analysis of concrete situations which allows us to develop a detailed understanding of the contradictory forces that shape a situation and identify openings for revolutionary

³⁸RGA, *On Identity Opportunism*: <https://redguardsaustin.wordpress.com/2017/04/10/on-identity-opportunism/>

³⁹A recent interview with Mazlum Kobane, a YPG member who is serving as the commander of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), should clear up any question about this matter. The SDF, in which the YPG has played the leading role, is a coalition of militias which have been backed by U.S. air power in the fight against ISIS and in some brief encounters with Russian-backed forces. Kobane details extensively how, from the perspective of the SDF and the YPG, the best outcome would be greater involvement by the U.S. in a post-ISIS Syria. This should clarify to those who are still unclear that the YPG is not a proletarian internationalist force, but one which is currently playing a proxy role for U.S. positioning relative to Russia and Russia-backed proxy forces. The interview is available online here: <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/09/turkey-kurdish-commander-says-us-should-stay-in-syria.html>.

Relatedly, Trump recently approved a \$400M aid package for the YPG, consisting of weapons including rifles, machine guns, and rocket launchers: <https://www.dailysabah.com/war-on-terror/2017/12/23/us-to-resume-aid-for-ypg-in-2018-as-trump-approves-393m-syria-weapons-list>. US Collaboration with the YPG has stepped up recently, but it has been ongoing for several years. The Wall Street Journal reported in 2015 on the “Marxist Allies” of the US in the fight against ISIS here: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/americas-marxist-allies-against-isis-1437747949>. We can only assume that comrades who advocate uncritical support for the YPG are either ignorant of this widely reported relationship or do not view it as a problem to cheerlead for a US backed comprador force.

⁴⁰Some people mistakenly believe this logic is Maoist and refer to a revisionist rendition of “Three World Theory” and the rightist seizure of diplomatic policy in the late Cultural Revolution to justify the claim. For an analysis of the line struggle in Chinese foreign policy on the question of proletarian internationalism, see *The Late Cultural Revolution*, at <http://www.massproletariat.info/documents/2016-12-13-Late-Cultural-Revolution.html>

politics.

In the context of the ongoing war in Syria, the rise of ISIS cannot be understood separately from years of treachery by the U.S. imperialists in the Mideast, North Africa, and Central Asia, including support for groups allied with Islamist forces in proxy wars up until the present.⁴¹ The bleeding wound the masses in Syria must endure daily is itself a product of the sharpening contradictions and competition between rival U.S., Russian, and Chinese imperialists and their many agents and comprador forces in the region. While ISIS represents a terrible threat to the people, underlying this formation is the ongoing machinations and proxy wars at the service of imperialist interests.

The situation is different from World War II, when the fascists constituted a leading force of global imperialist oppression, which the international communist movement needed to strategically defeat. At our moment, the dominant threat to the people is posed by the rival capitalist-imperialists, and not by the anti-people forces of ISIS—which some wrongly identify as equivalent to the fascist-imperialist threat posed in WWII. And even in WWII, in opposition to the principal threat of the fascist-imperialists, many of the communist parties adopted the unprincipled practice of embracing bourgeois-democratic politics. They abandoned or even sabotaged the fight for proletarian revolution in the process—as described in the previous section “RGA Tailing Antifa.” Repeating similar mistakes in the name of antifascism cannot but have negative consequences.

The struggles for national liberation in Northern Kurdistan/Rojava have the potential to become a leading force in opposition not only to forces such as ISIS, but also to the larger imperialist tyrants that have brought nothing but endless misery to the people locally and globally. But for these struggles to really win—and win they can—they cannot be subordinated to the politics of one imperialist state or another. It is always in the interests of the imperialists to bind all forces to their wider designs for subjugation and oppression of the broad masses. Revolutionary and democratic struggles will ultimately be liquidated under such arrangements.

Some, including RGA, have looked to the YPG, a group affiliated with the Kurdistan Workers’ Party, as a principled anti-fascist and pro-people force in the region. The YPG has been a key organization fighting against ISIS affiliated groups in northern Syria, and has also defended the semi-independent territory of Rojava. However, over the past year the YPG has engaged in close collaboration with the U.S. state’s armed forces. This consolidation to the camp of U.S. imperialism, as well as the YPG’s participation in the ongoing slaughter of civilians throughout Syria by U.S. airstrikes, clearly demonstrates that their

⁴¹<http://www.newsweek.com/us-military-battles-syria-rebels-supported-cia-backed-turkey-656617> c.f. also <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/03/05/the-redirection> in which Seymour Hersh discusses the shifts in U.S. foreign policy after the invasion of Iraq which led to the decisions to work with the Saudis to sponsor forces that eventually became ISIS to counter increasing Iranian influence in Iraq.

politics are a dead-end for the liberation of the Kurdish and other peoples. A willingness to work within the framework of imperialist interests is related to a faulty and bourgeois understanding of national struggles, as a struggle for so-called autonomy rather than for the national right to self-determination and secession. Revolutionaries must support democratic ideas and struggles while simultaneously opposing and rejecting arguments that subordinate mass struggles and national movements to the interests and initiative of oppressors such as the U.S. imperialists. The case of the YPG is no exception.

However, RGA has promoted uncritical support for the YPG. In a mock-funeral held in Austin, Texas for American fighters killed in Rojava they stated, “Today it does not concern us what leftist school of thought these comrades belonged to, what matters to us is that they have given their lives in the same spirit of internationalism and revolution which we hold so dear. All revolutions demand blood.”⁴² For RGA, political content is less important than bloodshed and nominal support for revolution. In contrast, MLM demands principled political unity based on grappling with the contradictions of the moment and upholding the lessons of the history of the ICM. This applies to united fronts as well, as spelled out in the TPK/ML’s statement. By failing to concretely analyze the situation in Rojava and Syria, RGA negates the importance of politics, instead emphasizing liberal unity based on anti-fascism. By seeing fascism, in the form of ISIS, as the “real evil,” they endorse forces who are increasingly functioning as a proxy for the U.S. imperialists.

This does not mean that we should support ISIS because the U.S. is opposed to it. Instead, we must support a revolutionary path necessary to advance the struggles of the people against their oppressors—the most fundamental of which are the imperialists—and struggle against deviations from this path, in particular the willingness to subordinate organizational initiative to imperialist interests.

In Syria, the primary contradiction is between the imperialists and the oppressed peoples of the country; this is also the primary contradiction on the world scale. As such, this contradiction can only be overcome by organizations which serve the interests of the people of the region and avoid alliances that subordinate the interests and independence of these groups to imperialist powers. Trying to find a way forward that relies principally on the support of an imperialist power or comprador force, whether they be in the form of Assad’s Russian-backed regime, or in a project supported principally through collaboration with U.S. forces, will not provide a way to break out of the present crisis. Arguing that forces like the YPG are the key to the liberation of the Kurdish people is analogous to arguing that Chiang Kai-shek and the KMT should have been the primary force in the War of Resistance Against Japan and in the New Democratic Revolution in China.

⁴²See Red Guards Austin’s video *Martyrs are Immortal*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I3DxoMyBxtI>

As G.N. Saibaba, the former joint-secretary of the Indian Revolutionary Democratic Front who is currently a political prisoner in India once said:

“In times of deep crisis like the one we are living through one can’t dismiss the possibility of an alliance with forces of political Islam along with the broad front of forces to smash imperialism, the number one enemy of the people in the world and the predator of planet-earth. It is the people of these countries who will decide about the feudal forces including forces of political Islam as per how they should be fought against. But imperialists like the U.S. should never be allowed to occupy or declare war on these countries in the name of”punishing the terrorists” and “war on terror.” Also to simultaneously condemn these forces alongside the marauder imperialists doesn’t lead us anywhere.”⁴³

In the case of its support for the YPG cited above, RGA could not be bothered to condemn U.S. intervention in the region at all. In contrast, revolutionaries must find creative ways to advance the cause of the people through understanding the lessons of past revolutionary struggle, and applying them to their particular situation. In doing so, we must analyze all aspects of a situation, and see what is needed to break through an impasse. It was by this method that Lenin developed the party of a new type, and Mao the New Democratic Revolution. As Ganapathi, Chairman of the Communist Party of India-Maoist said in 2009, revolutionaries must see the basis to unite the masses in Muslim countries against imperialism, stating:

“See, Islamic jihadist movements have two aspects: one is their anti-imperialist aspect, and the other their reactionary aspect in social and cultural matters. Our party supports the struggle of Muslim countries and people against imperialism, while criticising and struggling against the reactionary ideology and social outlook of Muslim fundamentalism. It is only Maoist leadership that can provide correct anti-imperialist orientation and achieve class unity among Muslims as well as people of other religious persuasions.”⁴⁴

Opportunists and reactionaries have little patience for these inconvenient “details.” Hence, while RGA may not have endorsed U.S. bourgeois elections, when it comes to U.S. military adventures abroad, they can give a pass, as long as blood is involved, together with the chance to do a photoshoot with “antifa” oriented fighters.

⁴³ *Interview with GN Saibaba on the Revolutionary and Democratic Movements in India*, May 18, 2010 by Geraldina Colotti for the Italian daily *Il Manifesto*: <http://bannedthought.net/India/RDF/Saibaba/Saibaba-interview-2010.pdf>

⁴⁴ From *People’s March* Vol. 10 No. 11, Nov. 2009, Chairman Ganapathi Interview, *We will Certainly Defeat the Government*: <http://www.bannedthought.net/India/PeoplesMarch/2009/PM2009-11.pdf>

A Race to the Finish Approach to Revolution

There is a need for revolutionary developments to happen as soon as possible. If not ecological collapse, then another inter-imperialist world war could threaten the masses of people with enormous suffering and decimation. Inter-imperialist conflict is already causing mass suffering and displacement in Yemen and Syria. Past revolutionaries also understood this need and urgency. Even spare the periodic calamities of war and destruction there is a need to unleash the potential of the masses through liberation not a second delayed, as daily life under capitalist-imperialism is built on the endless exploitation of the people for the benefit of the few. This was a foundational principle of the Russian and Chinese communist parties, and of many other revolutionaries.

In contrast, in their position paper, *Condemned to Win*, RGA cherry-picked one justification for a “race to the finish” approach to politics: “The current ecological situation merits a certain sense of urgency that has not been fully realized by past generations of communists.”⁴⁵ The revolutionaries previously mentioned actually did see the urgency of their situations on both a local and global scale. But moreover, they also grasped the need to work methodically to resolve contradictions among the people.

We should be concerned when people who purport to be Maoists start borrowing from the “This Changes Everything” class-negationist talk of people such as Naomi Klein or the RCP, both of whom seek a shortcut around necessary struggles in favor of a version of the “one-world, one-love” orientation of the liberals.

The urgency we must seize is the urgency to address the actual contradictions among the masses, not as we imagine them, but as they actually are.⁴⁶ Only thus can we handle contradictions among the people in a manner which develops proletarian power in individuals and emerging collectives, even if progress may be hard and slow at first. While we may be relatively weak now, it is only through such work, in addition to daring to struggle and daring to win in the course of confrontations with oppressors, that we will become strong.

As CPI-Maoist put it in a recent edition of *People’s War*:

“By creatively applying MLM in the concrete conditions of a country, by bringing the vast masses of the people into the arena of class struggle under its guidance and by fighting with tremendous courage and sacrifice, a strong party can be built where there is no such party, a strong army can be built where there is no such army and

⁴⁵From RGA’s *Condemned to Win*: <https://redguardsaustin.wordpress.com/2016/07/05/condemned-to-win-position-paper-from-red-guards-austin-2016/>

⁴⁶For an example of such imaginary depictions of the masses, in their *Everywhere a Battlefield* ramble, RGA declares that “Culturally, the working class upholds symbols of physical prowess, with sportswear almost ubiquitous in working-class closets. We might not even have our Sunday best, but you can bet that we have track suits, sneakers, gym shorts, and hooded sweatshirts” <https://redguardsaustin.wordpress.com/2017/08/27/everywhere-a-battlefield/>

political power can be seized where there is no political power. Our task ahead is to firmly grasp MLM and the spirit of GPCR [the Chinese Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution] in order to achieve our immediate and ultimate goals. It is only in this way that the working-class can meet the challenge of effectively fighting and finally burying imperialism, which, though in its deathbed, will not leave the stage of history on its own.”⁴⁷

RGA’s operation and politics are a negation of such necessary work. Their aforementioned endorsement of a focoist line as opposed to a mass-line, their attempts to wreck emerging Maoist collectives, their class-negationist conceptions of the masses as “those without”, their rejection of external criticism of male chauvinism and other oppression within their organization, and their uncritical support of allies of U.S. imperialism abroad betray a deeply anti-people politics. RGA’s approach is in direct contradiction with the constant efforts of Mao and others in the CCP to discredit this sort of metaphysical view of leadership and politics. Despite RGA’s claim to uphold the anti-revisionist ICM, and to uphold MLM, they are actually in disagreement with its fundamental principles. In the end we are left with a lot of glorification of names by RGA but a near complete gutting of the revolutionary content behind these names—a tendency which historically has been referred to as “leftist” phrase-mongering. Mao’s denunciation of Lin Biao’s “genius-theory” sums up the orientation behind such an approach to politics: “Then there is this business of ‘glorification.’ They pretend to glorify me. In truth they want to glorify themselves.”⁴⁸

We must cast-aside such petty-bourgeois fantasies, and instead join the masses in their day-to-day struggles. Doing so is essential to combat petty-bourgeois outlooks among aspiring revolutionaries. Only through advancing the struggles of the masses against their present oppressors will it be possible to truly combat capitalist-imperialism, emerging fascism, and ecological collapse. As we stated in our *Course Correction* document: “Dare to Struggle Means You!”⁴⁹ We hope and welcome comradely discussion with all who embark even a single step forward on this path.

⁴⁷Central Committee of CPI-Maoist, *People’s War*, Volume 11 (Special Issue on the 50th Anniversary of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution), March 2017, p. 20.

⁴⁸“Their raising the issue of ”genius” is the way to create a priori for idealism. They claimed that anyone that objects to the term ”genius” is against me. I am not a genius ... Genius comes from the mass line and collective wisdom ... How do we deal with these people? Our policy remains the same—education. ”Learn from the past mistakes to avoid future ones, and cure the sickness to save the patient” ... The first mistake is to err on the major principle, line, and direction. This is difficult to correct. They talk about the ”peak” and say that ”each word is equal to ten thousand words.” They are overdoing it. One word is one word; how can one word equal ten thousand words? ... Then there is this business of ”glorification.” They pretend to glorify me. In truth they want to glorify themselves” From “Summary of Chairman Mao’s Talks with Regional Leaders During His Inspection Tour” cited in, *A Glossary of Political Terms of the People’s Republic of China* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1995), 487: <https://books.google.com/books?isbn=9622016154>

⁴⁹From Mass Proletariat *A Course Correction for Maoism in the U.S.*: http://www.massproletariat.info/writings/2016-08-16-Course_Correction.html

Dare to Think, Dare to Act, Dare to Struggle, Dare to Win,
– Mass Proletariat