

Maoism vs MLMpM

In the international communist movement in recent years, there has emerged a number of organizations active under the label «Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, principally Maoism.» These promote President Gonzalo (Abimael Guzmán) as «the greatest communist of our time», dogmatically and mechanically associating with the theories of Gonzalo and the Communist Party of Peru (PCP), and arguing that parts of «Gonzalo Thought» are universal.

Many other communist parties and organizations (such as the CPI (Maoist) in India and the CPP in the Philippines) also follow MLM, without sharing the abovementioned view about Gonzalo's and the PCP's theories, and without distinguishing themselves with «Maoism first and foremost». To tell these tendencies apart, we will therefore consistently refer to the supporters of Gonzalo and the PCP as «MLMpM».

Erroneous theories and practice by the MLMpM

We disagree with some of the theories of Gonzalo and the PCP, as well as how these are practiced in the organizations that follow MLMpM. We believe that several of these contradictions between us and MLMpM are so important that joint communist organising today is not possible.

Jefatura

Gonzalo has a theory about «Jefatura», which is translated as «Great leadership». In «Struggle Sessions» (SS), an MLMpM body with base in the USA, Jefatura is described as follows:

«All leaders are experienced. But Great Leaders unify the militarized Party around themselves and embody the revolution through correct navigation of two-line struggle.»

<https://struggle-sessions.com/2018/07/20/on-the-maoist-principle-of-great-leadership/>

We believe that an adequate Norwegian term for «Jefatura» is «førerskap». There can only be one «fører» of a party, just as there can only be one «fører» of a vehicle. «Fører» has also been previously used in Norway to mark that the party has a leader who is above everyone else, whom the whole party rallies around and who through his person embodies the party.

The MLMpM organizations believe this is not cult of personality. It is a position we disagree with; we believe it is precisely cult of personality. What else would be cult of personality, if not to proclaim a person as the very embodiment of the party and its leading thought? This cult of personality is illustrated in posters and other propaganda from Peru, where the man Gonzalo is used as the party's symbol and where party members and the masses are portrayed as paying tribute to him.

Cult of personality is nothing new in the communist context. It has existed for all major communist leaders. Most famous is perhaps the cult of personality of Stalin and Mao, but all these leaders except for Gonzalo distanced themselves from it and asserted it as something negative. Mao described it as follows:

The cult of the individual is a rotten carry-over from the long history of mankind. The cult of the individual is rooted not only in the exploiting classes but also in the small producers. As is well known, patriarchy is a product of small-producer economy...

Mao,

https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-7/mswv7_467.htm

Stalin wrote this:

You speak of your «devotion» to me. Perhaps this is a phrase that came out accidentally. Perhaps... But if it is not a chance phrase, I would advise you to discard the «principle» of devotion to persons. It is not the Bolshevik way. Be devoted to the working class, its Party, its state. That is a fine and useful thing. But do not confuse it with devotion to persons, this vain and useless bauble of weak-minded intellectuals

Stalin, from Grover Furr, Khrushchev lied, p. 218-19

and later:

I am absolutely against the publication of «Stories of the Childhood of Stalin». The book abounds with a mass of inexactitudes of fact, of alterations, of exaggerations and of unmerited praise... But... the important thing resides in the fact that the book has a tendency to engrave on the minds of Soviet children (and people in general) the personality cult of leaders, of infallible heroes. This is dangerous and detrimental. The theory of «heroes» and the «crowd» is not a Bolshevik, but a Social-Revolutionary theory... I suggest we burn this book.»

– *Ibid, p. 220*

Gonzalo, on the other hand, embraced the cult of personality and created the theory of «Jefatura».

See also: [«PKP om heltemotes dag»](#)

Instead of the Great leadership principle in the party, we believe the party must build on collective leadership and on building a party of leaders. If the most important thing were to forge one leader, instead of forging everyone in the party/organisation, it would have practical consequences on

the way tasks are distributed when the communist organization is constructed. If the most important thing were to foster one leader, it would be natural that he or she will hold most forewords, speak as often as possible in meetings, hold speeches on most occasions, etc. With the principles of collective leadership and of the party of leaders, everyone is challenged on such tasks, in rotation. It is an obvious weakness not to have more than one leader in a communist organization. This has also in many ways consequences for the internal democracy, since we also need leadership in the struggle to correct leaders' mistakes.

Even if usually a party has one leader at the top (this is most common even in bourgeois parties), the party should still form many leaders. We can not know in advance who should be the «great leader» and thus put everything into fostering him or her – this may make us overlook other good leadership qualities. In addition, it is wise to have leaders who can take over if someone falls, whether due to illness, imprisonment, or other reasons. It is astounding that the Naxalites in India and the CPP in the Philippines have endured their respective people's wars for over forty years, despite the fact that their leaders have been imprisoned, killed or sent into exile, while the people's war in Peru more or less collapsed into chaos when Gonzalo was arrested.

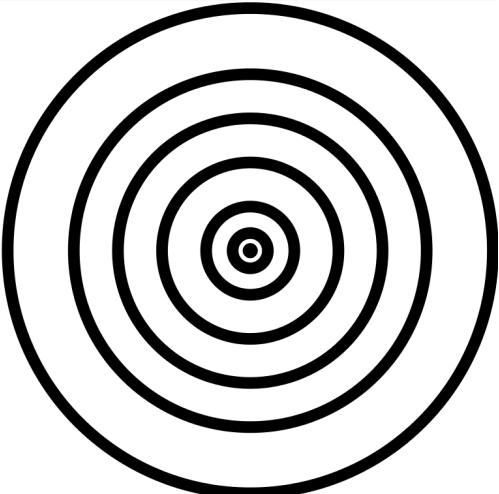
Another serious weakness of the leadership cult is the theory that the leader is an embodiment of the revolution (see «On the Maoist Principle of Great Leadership» in Struggle Sessions). A logical consequence is that criticism of the leader becomes counter-revolutionary, since it is criticism of the revolution itself.

Without a healthy climate for criticism and discussion, mistakes cannot be corrected and the line rectified. By introducing the leadership principle in the organization, a wrong line has already been drawn.

The theory of Jefatura had catastrophic consequences for the party when Gonzalo and several other leading members were arrested. Following Gonzalo's arrest, the authorities put up a derisory show with Gonzalo dressed in a Donald Duck prison suit in a cage. Gonzalo managed to seize the opportunity in giving an incendiary speech in which he called for the continuation of the people's war, and stated that his arrest was no more than a small bump in the road. Later, however, there came out several reports and occurrences indicating that Gonzalo changed his beliefs and supported peace negotiations.((https://www.bannedthought.net/International/RIM/AWTW/2006-32/32Peru.htm?utm_s))

Since the leader was treated as infallible, there could have only be one of two outcomes: either the party members would end the people's war, or they would reject the reports as false and maintain that Gonzalo was still supporting it. As there came more and more reports and events pointing to the fact that Gonzalo was in fact a supporter of laying down the arms, it became increasingly difficult to believe that Gonzalo was still in favor of continuing the people's war. The right wing of the PCP ran a line struggle where they argued for laying down the arms and claimed that Gonzalo was on their side. The left, for its part, never brought any political line struggle, but denied categorically that Gonzalo had changed sides and attacked all reports, testimonies, etc. that indicated otherwise, as being fake.((https://www.bannedthought.net/International/RIM/AWTW/2006-32/32Peru.htm?utm_source=pocket_mylist)). The result was that the party more or less crumbled as a result of the reports (true or false) that Gonzalo had gone over to the right.

Concentric circles



Model of concentric circles. The circles spring out from the same center. Alberto Barbati – Own work, CC BY-SA 2.5, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=828148>.

MLMpM has a theory that there should be a «concentric structure of the three tools of the revolution: the party, the army and the front». This means that the army is organized around the party, while the front is organized around the army. «The party must hold on, and do everything necessary to be the only and recognized centre» (See «Legg vekk illusionene og kast dere inn i kampen» at Tjen Folket Media).

The innermost core and innermost leadership here becomes the leadership of the Communist Party. In other words, the leadership springs from the core, then outward into the outer circles. Everyone in the party must be in the army and the front, but not the other way round. In other words, based on this model, the front organizations cannot choose their own leaders, at least not real leaders. Any leadership elected by the front will have to be subjected to the party leadership.

We believe this is an undemocratic and incorrect way of front work. We also believe that it contradicts the Maoist mass line «from the masses, to the masses». We believe that the party should not lead the fronts through a formal submission of the front and its organizations to the party, but in that the party always and constantly struggles to win trust, that the party acts as a leader by this trust and leads the front together with the front's leaders. We further believe that the

party should have a humble attitude where we always remember and understand that it is the masses who are the real heroes, while we ourselves in many cases may be ignorant, and that to the same extent as we provide leadership and knowledge to the masses, we must constantly learn from the masses and from their knowledge.

The masses are the real heroes, while we ourselves are often childish and ignorant, and without this understanding it is impossible to acquire even the most rudimentary knowledge.

– <http://www.morningsun.org/living/redbook/book11.html>

Militarisation of the party

In one of its most important documents, the PCP writes:

«Chairman Gonzalo formulates the militarisation of the communist party, and the concentric construction of the three tools. The militarisation of the communist party is a political guideline with strategic content, since it is «the sum of the transformations, changes and corrections that are necessary to be able to lead the people's war as the main form of the struggle that will create the new state». Therefore, the militarization of the communist party is the key to the democratic and the socialist revolution, as well as to the cultural revolutions. «

<https://tjen-folket.no/index.php/2020/10/02/pkp-linja-for-oppbyggingen-av-revolusjonens-tre-verktoy/>

We understand the militarisation of the party as organising it in a way that is similar to the organization of the military. This means, among other things, that there is a command structure – including great responsibility and power to individuals in taking decisions. For an army in a war such a structure is necessary, since there is no time to go through democratic processes before decisions are made. For a

communist party, on the other hand, it is necessary to practice democratic centralism. This is not compatible with a militarised structure, since the decisions would not be decided by democratic processes, but by individuals top-down. The principle where it is clearly defined who can decide what, is in line with both democratic centralism and the militarised model, but the difference is that in democratic centralism there are bodies composed of a number of individuals who make decisions in a democratic way, while in the militarised model there are single individuals making the decisions.

Militarising the party also aims at beginning with military actions from an early stage.

The PCP on militarising the party: «At the 1st national conference in November 1979, Chairman Gonzalo presented the thesis on the necessity of militarising the Communist Party of Peru. In the first months of 1980, when the party was preparing to start the people's war, he stated that the party must be militarised via actions, and based itself on the great Lenin who states that the non-military work should be reduced in order to focus on the military, that peacetime was over and that we were heading into wartime and that therefore all forces should be militarised. So, with the party as the hub of everything, the army is built up, and around these two tools, with the participation of the masses in the people's war, the new state is built. The militarisation of the party can only be carried forward via concrete class struggle actions, concrete actions of a military type. This does not mean that we should carry out military actions exclusively (guerrilla actions, sabotage, liquidations, armed propaganda and agitation), but that we mainly focus on these forms of struggle with the aim of increasing and developing the class struggle, educating by acting, with these types of actions as the main forms of the people's war.»

<https://tjen-folket.no/index.php/2020/10/02/pkp-linja-for-oppbyggingen-av-revolusjonens-tre-verktoy/>

As we understand it, there is a common thread from the principle of Jefatura (leadership) to the militarisation of the party and the concentric building of party, army and front, where in the centre there will be a more or less almighty party leader who has an officer corps that governs the party, the army and the front organizations. We believe this is a despotic way of organising that is harmful and contrary to the communist principle of democratic centralism.

With centralism without democracy, it becomes impossible to correct wrong political lines and other mistakes in the leadership. Everybody makes mistakes – no one is infallible. A strong collective is stronger than any individual, and has greater thought power than any individual. Through collective effort we can devise better political lines, and make better plans than any individual can do. In addition, if the lower levels are not involved in the decisions, they will not feel any ownership of the decision – they will be alienated from it. The more are alienated from the decision, the less enthusiasm there will be for it, and thus the ability to implement it will be weakened.

The militarisation of the party may seem a way to reinforce its strength, but in reality it is the opposite. At least when this is done at an early stage and in a period of legality, where the party is still in a building phase and not under strong repression from the enemy. Therefore is democratic centralism in reality a more effective method of building a strong communist party than the militarised model.

Determinism

In one of the PCP's foundational documents: «The line for building the revolution's three tools», the PCP writes:

«This is a party of a new kind, which has created the leader of the Peruvian revolution: President Gonzalo, the greatest living Marxist-Leninist-Maoist, who leads the party,

guarantees the revolution's triumph and will lead us to communism.»

<https://tjen-folket.no/index.php/2020/10/02/pkp-linja-for-oppbyggingen-av-revolusjonens-tre-verktoy/>

We believe this sentence to be deterministic. To guarantee in advance the triumph of an ongoing revolution is not in line with Marxist philosophy, for in the latter there is a place for chance. We will here quote from a previous article by Tjen Folket:

In «Science of Logic», Hegel states that «the random has a reason why it is random, and that there is just as little reason why it is random; that the random is necessary, and that this necessity determines itself as random, and on the other hand that this randomness is the absolute necessity.»

In the book «Herr Eugen Dühring's overthrow of science» (1878) Engels said that if we understand what Hegel says here, we can avoid either becoming determinists as Demokrit, or ending up in Epicurus's two traps: 1) to create an absolute principle out of what can be seen from isolated phenomena and randomly without context, and 2) to believe that you can only think in terms and laws of each individual phenomenon – that everything in the world is governed by eternal and immutable laws.»

<http://arkiv.tjen-folket.no/Sentralt/view/12531.html>

In retrospect it seems that the probability of this prophecy of the PCP succeeding is also reasonably small. The revolution in Peru suffered a serious setback when Gonzalo and the rest of the leadership were arrested. Gonzalo is now 86 years old and is still in solitary confinement in a prison. Most of the PCP laid down their arms when it was announced that Gonzalo from captivity had put and end to the war. The people's war in

Peru has unfortunately not managed to rise again after this setback.

Going underground

A number of MLMpM groups have gone underground in the sense that they are not visible in the public space – neither the physical nor the digital, even though they have been subjected to at best only mild repression by the bourgeois state. We believe that to go underground prematurely, it means cutting oneself off from a number of legal rights that can be used to establish ties with the masses and to get in touch with non-organised revolutionaries, or with those who are interested in revolutionary theory and politics.

We believe that the consequence of going underground too early is that the organisation will stagnate. We also disagree that taking the organisation underground necessarily leads to increased security. Even if the organization is not visible in the public space, it is still entirely possible for the intelligence services to obtain an overview of the membership through infiltration and surveillance. Regardless of whether the organization is above the surface or underground, one must organise in such a way that the intelligence services only obtain limited information through infiltration and surveillance.

We believe that a correct communist line is to utilise the democratic rights and struggle to defend them, while at the same time be prepared to take the organization underground and have a plan for it, since this will be a necessity in a situation of sharpened class struggle.

Engaging in only underground revolutionary work is a break from Mao. It testifies to a lack of understanding of the importance of open revolutionary work, something Mao uses as an example of one-sidedness and subjectivism in the article «On Contradiction».

Having a correct political line

We believe that an important reason of why communists orient themselves towards the PCP is that they want to «secure themselves» against revisionism and prevent the party from falling into legalism and the electoral road. We recognise and understand this need. The greatest threat to revolutionary communist parties is revisionism (making Marxism non-revolutionary). The problem is that one cannot «secure oneself» against revisionism in advance; one has to fight against it all the time. One cannot «ratify away» revisionism by introducing a line for people's war and for the militarisation of the party, without the support of the people.

To build the communist party means to gradually gather forces, analyse the uneven development of the society, conduct thorough social research, win over the advanced sections of the masses, establish mass organizations under communist leadership, and challenge both the cadres and the masses to seize power where possible. We must have confidence that we will be able to build a people's army when the subjective and objective conditions are ripe, even if they are not now. In the meantime we must continuously work for political power and against revisionist tendencies. The communists must trust the masses, and have their trust. We must be vigilant and critical, constantly on the lookout for errors in ourselves and fight the rightist line wherever it may arise. This is hard work, and there are no quick and simple solutions.