

A summary of internal discussion and criticism from outside

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In the fall of 2024, the Revolutionary Communist League (RK) held the second session of its first congress. The congress started with its first session in the fall of 2023.

The first session adopted statutes and changed the name of the organization to the Revolutionary Communist League. The second session adopted a new political basis for the league, in the form of theses and short statements. These will now be collected into a comprehensive document, which will be RK's new platform. The platform will be ready in the spring of 2025 and will replace the *Standpunkt* ('Standpoint') document.

In the run-up to the national congress, we have had thorough and lively political discussions, both internally and with comrades outside the League. In the summer of 2023, we launched a campaign to collect criticism and input, mainly for our platform document, but also for the organization in general.

In this text, we will report on the input received through the criticism campaign and summarize the most important internal discussions in the run-up to second session of the national congress.

We believe it will be useful for the revolutionary movement to present the views that have emerged in the discussions so far. However, we would like to emphasize that the last word has not been said and that the discussion must continue even after the platform is ready.

The Campaign of Criticism

The second plenary session of the first congress primarily dealt with proposals on what should be included in the new RK's platform. Since 2022, the "Standpunkt" document has been the organization's platform, setting out the principles and positions that united the organization when it was founded. The document also helped to delineate us from neighboring organizations on the left, and justified the need for a new communist organization. Since then, RK has grown and developed. We have studied and discussed, we have participated in national and international correspondence, made new practical experiences, summarized and evaluated the practical experiences in the light of theory, etc. Our understanding of revolutionary communism has become both broader and deeper, so that the *Standpunkt* document no longer gives an accurate picture of where the League stands.

In July 2023, we launched a Campaign of Criticism, asking for suggestions and input on the platform document, to better enable us to write a more permanent platform. Through this campaign, we have received many critical comments on the old *Standpunkt* document, which have been very helpful. Some of these comments can be read on kommunisten.no.¹²

In contrast to the temporary *Standpunkt* document, the new platform will be a political document that we can work with for a long time to come. Nevertheless, it will not be the last word when it comes to analysis and strategy. We can never be satisfied with what we think we know, as knowledge is always dynamic and evolving. In order to develop our own understanding of the theory, it is crucial that we actively participate in the class struggle, and develop the theory in dialogue with practice. We cannot give concrete answers to all questions, especially as a small and young organization, but we hope that the platform can be a basis of unity for revolutionary communists in Norway.

Overview of critical input from outside

Capitalism and imperialism

Several contributors felt that the *Standpunkt* document provides unclear or too simple definitions of capitalism, imperialism and the state. A Danish comrade³ and Espen S. from RK⁴ pointed out that the definition of capitalism in the *Standpunkt* document excludes state monopoly capitalism, and we agree with this criticism. Several people have also pointed out that the document did not address Norway's role in the imperialist world system. Another significant shortcoming is that the document did not discuss how revolutionary strategy in an imperialist country like Norway differs from strategy in oppressed countries.

Patriarchy and the oppression of women

Another particularly inadequate part of the document was the section dealing with patriarchy and the oppression of women. Here we received a lot of good criticism from a number of people, and we greatly appreciate this input. Among other things, it was pointed out that the *Standpunkt* document does not discuss the systematic violence against women, the role the family plays in the oppression of women, or how the capitalist economy reproduces the

oppression of women in the form of lower wages and poorer working conditions for women. The comrades who submitted the critique argued that the patriarchal family must be understood as fundamental to the oppression of women, and that this is part of the economic base of society.

Similar objections have been raised internally for some time. The new platform will therefore include a more in-depth discussion of how women's oppression is fully integrated into the capitalist mode of production. The session also decided that we will conduct an internal study circle in Marxist-feminist theory until the platform is adopted.

Basic outlook

We were also criticized for defining our basic outlook as Maoist. Several felt that this makes the political basis of the league too narrow, and that we then alienate people who otherwise agree with us politically. These comrades felt that the platform should generally avoid references to historical revolutions and figures. We believe that some of this criticism addresses a real problem, but we do not entirely agree with the conclusion. We think it's true that the old platform puts too much emphasis on the contributions of individuals to scientific socialism, offering fairly simple explanations of complicated historical questions. The new platform will de-emphasize this, focusing instead on the issues that the revolutionary movement should address, the principal basis of the league's unity, and what concrete goals we are fighting for in the short and long term. We hope that the platform will thus be able to gain support from revolutionaries who do not consider themselves Maoists.

Symbolism

Finally, there was criticism of how the organization represents itself externally. One of those who submitted criticism felt that it was problematic that the RK uses the hammer and sickle as a symbol, as this has also been used by revisionist states and parties. However, the congress did not decide to change the symbol, and this is not a current discussion in the organization. A counter-argument that has been raised internally is that we should not allow revisionists to take over the hammer and sickle, but rather fight for the symbol's revolutionary content.

The criticism campaign has been useful for understanding how RK is perceived by others in the communist movement. This is part of the background to the decision to change the name of RK's online organ, from *maoisme.no* to *Kommunisten* ('The Communist'). The two main reasons for the name change were: Firstly, we wanted a name that sounds more like an online newspaper and can stand the test of time. Secondly, we wanted to make the website more interesting for comrades who do not see themselves as Maoists.⁵

Internal discussion

Since RK was founded, it has been important for us to cultivate an internal culture based on discussion in good faith, where every member can raise disagreements no matter how big or small, receive criticism and criticize others. Not to mention, we need a culture where the

discussion has a real impact on the organization's policies and practices. It's also important that this discussion doesn't just take place behind closed doors.

On the state after the revolution, the standing army and police

It has been generally accepted in the revolutionary movement that you cannot take over the existing state machinery and "impose" socialism from above. Communists generally recognize that revolution involves getting rid of the existing state machinery and replacing it with workers' rule (also called the dictatorship of the proletariat). This is because the existing state machinery is structured in a way that prevents the majority, especially the workers, from having influence over politics.

However, one question has always been relevant to revolutionaries — how to replace the old political structures with something that is both feasible and genuinely liberating and democratic?

The function of the workers' rule is not to be a "welfare state" with a red flag, but rather something that can actually be part of the sublation of capitalism, class society as such and thus also the state itself. The old position paper contained this formulation:

"The armed forces of the new state (the army and the police) must be part of the general arming of the people, and not a standing army and police force separate from the people."

This formulation was in line with similar criteria for the workers' rule that are taken up by Marx, Engels and Lenin, but only to a relatively small extent discussed and theorized in the organization. Some in the League have criticized the formulation as dogmatic. The argument goes like this: The historical experience of the proletariat (especially the Russian and Chinese revolutions) has shown that it is not possible to get rid of the standing army and police immediately, and that these can only be abolished as part of a future process in which the state gradually withers away. This discussion has been taken up again several times in the run-up to the second session of the congress.

As previously mentioned, the founders of Marxism, Marx and Engels, considered it necessary for the proletariat to abolish the standing army.⁶ This view is continued by Lenin and the Bolsheviks (in the program of the RSDAP from 1903, in the *State and Revolution*,⁷ in the program of the Bolsheviks from 1919, in Lenin's lecture on "The State" from 1919, in Renegade Kautsky, etc.).

Today, many in the Marxist-Leninist tradition and in the Maoist movement believe that the standing army and the police have been necessary to defend the workers' rule and the revolution, based on historical experience. They point out that the early Bolsheviks, including Lenin, lacked the necessary practical experience when they advocated abolishing the standing army, police and bureaucracy. The establishment of the Red Army as a standing army during the Russian Civil War was therefore legitimate, necessary and highly inevitable.

Supporters of this view believe that such armies, with a tight command structure and a high degree of specialization, are more effective in warfare than any alternative military organization. They point to the creation of standing armies in the Soviet Union and China, and argue that no revolution has been able to defend itself for any length of time without a standing army. They argue that technological developments since then have made it even more difficult to defend the gains of the revolution without incorporating the structures and strategies that characterize standing armies today. They also argue that the term “standing army” is not normative,⁸ and that the armies of the Soviet Union and China were standing armies even though they were organized in very different ways.

Opponents of this position argue that “efficiency” is not a neutral concept without class implications, and that a standing army is not a means suited to the proletariat’s advantages and disadvantages in the class struggle. The bourgeoisie possesses superior technology, has the vast majority of experts (both military and technological) on its side, and controls the existing military infrastructure. The proletariat, on the other hand, consists of far more members, and is integrated into the infrastructure of the capitalist machinery. The proletariat must therefore use unconventional strategies instead of facing the capitalists in symmetrical warfare.

Standing armies and police have developed historically to maintain the bourgeois order. Their professionalized and undemocratic structure is not just a consequence of “efficiency”, but very much a necessity under a system that serves very few and where repression must be enforced from above.

Opponents of the standing army argument also believe that the historical comparisons on which it is based make little sense. In Russia in 1918, the technological difference between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat was far smaller than today. In both China and Russia, the bourgeoisie was little established, had little expertise, and technology was far less developed (and much more accessible). In China, the communists won anyway, not through a standard standing army (despite the peasantry making up a majority of those mobilized), but through a people’s army that used democratic strategies to empower and liberate the people, prevent bureaucratic and top-down control, etc.

Norway has completely different conditions. The class enemy here is a much more advanced and well-established bourgeoisie, which will use satellites, drones, and sophisticated infrastructure to prevent defeat. These are technologies that are much more difficult for the proletariat to face in symmetrical warfare.

Among other things, the second session of the congress resolved that a future workers’ rule should be “founded on the general and organized arming of the proletariat, and not a standing army and police force separated from the people”.

Is bureaucracy inevitable?

By “bureaucracy” we mean a hierarchical system of hired (as opposed to elected) officials, who are separated from the rest of the population. Bureaucracy is typical of the modern bourgeois state, but has also emerged in several communist projects such as the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China. The disagreement touched on the following issues:

- Was it inevitable that bureaucracy arose in the Soviet Union and China?
- Does this indicate a historical necessity of what the “dictatorship of the proletariat” entails (keeping the bourgeoisie down)? Or was it a consequence of peculiarities of the Bolshevik and Chinese revolutions, or decisions made by Bolsheviks and Chinese communists?
- Should we demand the abolition of the bureaucracy, if it is inevitable anyway?
- To what extent are communists anti-bureaucratic?

There were several different positions in this debate. There were those who believed that historical experience has shown that “bureaucratization” is to some extent inevitable. Others believed that it is possible to fight against bureaucratizing tendencies, and that “bureaucracy” should not just be accepted as a fact. At the second session of the congress it was decided, among other things, that workers’ rule in Norwegian conditions means that “employed bureaucrats are replaced by elected officials, who can be recalled at any time by those who have elected them.”

On organizational structure

The question of organizational structure has since the beginning been one of the most discussed. Over time, a unity has developed on some general points. At the same time, new organizational challenges have led to new problems or reassessments of old problems.

Although the concept of the “council model” or “council democracy” — in the context of democratic centralism and “unity-criticism-unity” — is generally accepted, there have been disagreements about which aspects of them should be applied, and to what extent.

The Communist recently published a contribution to this debate, entitled “Communist Democracy and Leadership.”⁹ This post both outlines some of the issues in this debate and argues for a “leading collective” line. It also suggests that the principles of council democracy are valid for the proletarian state, but not for a communist organization.

Roughly speaking, the “council model” or “council democracy” entails the following — as defined in the organization’s statutes:

“The organization’s policies are determined through the active participation of the entire membership, and all positions are delegated from below with an imperative mandate and are revocable at any time. All members must respect organizational democracy. Diversity in discussion is essential while unity in action is required.”

The discussion about the application of council democracy mainly revolves around “leading collectives”. While some members of the organization want to emphasize breaking down the divide between those who govern and those who are governed over, and therefore also prioritize that everyone should be able to gain experience with different aspects of the organizational work, other members believe that the organization should build specific “leading collectives” that have experience of working together on the same tasks. The practical consequence has mostly been that some members are more skeptical about rotation and want responsibility to be delegated more long-term, while others are in favor of more frequent rotation.

On historical figures and how we should relate to them

There have been several discussions in the organization about various historical figures and how we should relate to historical figures in general. The discussions have been about how we should relate to anniversaries related to individuals (for instance: Should we celebrate birthdays?), the use of portraits of people as symbols and more specifically “the big five” as a symbol. We have also discussed how to consider Stalin.

Many people in the RK have generally been skeptical about using people as symbols, and it can be said that there is a broad consensus not to place too much emphasis on individuals in the development of history. However, some have defended the “Big Five” as a symbol, i.e. portraits of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao. Those who defended this symbol believed that it is “the best way to represent our politics”. The counter-argument is that using such symbolism is a form of personality cult, and that in any case it does not clearly distinguish us from other organizations with similar symbolism. Several people have also objected to Stalin being included in such a symbol.

RK’s “Platform document” contained the following position on Stalin:

Mao summarised and criticized several mistakes made in the Soviet Union under Stalin, from which we can learn. These include:

- Lacking use of the mass line and a lack of trust in the masses, combined with an excessive belief in technocratic state leadership in the revolution. When it comes to the fight against counterrevolutionaries, the focus was on the secret police rather than the masses' own help.
- A view that contradictions in the Communist Party are an expression of hostile influence from outside, instead of an inevitable reflection of the fact that socialism is still a class society. Contradictions were therefore tried to be resolved through repression instead of line struggle.
- A lack of understanding that *contradictions among the people* and *contradictions between the people and the enemy* must be treated differently. This led to excessive use of prisons and executions. Bourgeois elements who managed to avoid repression were allowed to grow strong in the alleys.
- A lack of understanding that the class struggle continues under socialism, and that one must let loose the masses to prevent counter-revolution both in society in general and in the Communist Party in particular.

At the same time, we agree with Mao's assessment of Stalin as mostly good. Under Stalin's leadership, we gained the first experiences of building a socialist economy, and these were mainly good experiences. The rapid build-up of the Soviet economy under Stalin's leadership made it possible to defeat Hitler's fascism. We agree with Mao's analysis that the Soviet Union became state capitalist after Stalin and believe that Mao's critique of the Soviet Union applies also to the system that was created in China after Mao's death.

Over time, several people have criticized this section, both inside and outside the organization. One of the criticisms was that it doesn't make sense that the Soviet Union should have gone from being "socialist" to "state capitalist" overnight. Revisionism, or the reversion to capitalism, must be explained on a more systemic level.

Some members have also pointed out some important continuities between Krushchev and Stalin. For example, the theories of the "state of the whole people", peaceful coexistence between imperialism and socialism, and parliamentary transition to socialism were developed by Stalin and disseminated in the International Communist Movement through the Comintern.¹⁰ It has also been questioned whether the Soviet Union under Stalin, especially in later times, can be described as a dictatorship of the proletariat, especially given the structural changes that took place in the Soviet Union in the 1930s and were legislated in the 1936 constitution. Several Maoist organizations, such as OCML-VP in France and Förbundet Kommunist in Sweden, have criticized Stalin in similar ways and believed that the capitalist restoration was already happening under Stalin.

The second session did not adopt any specific claims about Stalin, the Soviet Union under Stalin, or any other historical figures. Part of the explanation is that we want to put less emphasis on such things in general. Also, the discussion is still quite underdeveloped and we need to take it further. For the time being, the wording from the *Standpunkt* document has been removed from the platform.

On Marxism-Leninism-Maoism

The second session adopted the following wording for the paragraph in our statutes that defines our political outlook:

“The union bases its policy on revolutionary communism. RK is also a Marxist organization, which stands in the Maoist tradition.”

The paragraph previously read as follows: “The leading ideology of the union is revolutionary communism, i.e. Marxism-Leninism-Maoism”.

This change means that we do not explicitly endorse the formulation “Marxism-Leninism-Maoism”. The new wording allows for different perceptions of Maoism to coexist in the organization, while at the same time establishing “revolutionary communism” as our common basic viewpoint.

The paragraph also includes the deletion of the word “ideology” from the statutes. In short, the new wording allows for an open, thorough and unprejudiced discussion about the content of Maoism, how we should understand terms such as “science”, “ideology” and “theory”, and the epistemological basis for a scientific socialism.

The question of whether we can use the term “Marxism-Leninism-Maoism” to describe our basic political outlook, and what this term would entail, has been discussed internally for a long time. From early on, several people have been skeptical toward this wording, because of its theoretical implications. Skeptics believe that the term perpetuates individualistic prejudices about how science develops. Furthermore, they believe that our politics cannot be based on a selection of theses that we see as “universally applicable” or “correct”. For example: Starting from the assumption that the theory of cultural revolution is universally applicable, and then examining how the theory can be “applied” to Norwegian conditions. Other objections are that the term can ossify our understanding of revolutionary theory by locking us into a canon of “classics”, and that it underplays how Maoism is a break with Stalin’s and the Comintern’s synthesis of “Marxism-Leninism”. Another objection, from an aesthetic point of view, is that the expression simply sounds stiff.

Others have argued that the term is appropriate because it shows how scientific socialism has developed in three distinct “stages”, personified by Marx, Lenin and Mao. In this model, each stage represents a synthesis of the teachings of the previous world-historical revolution and, at the same time, a paradigm shift with the preceding stage. Leninism, which is based on the experiences of the Russian Revolution, is thus both a break with orthodox Marxism and a

continuation of the essence of Marxism. Maoism, which in turn is based on the experiences of the Chinese revolution (especially the Cultural Revolution), is a break with Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy that at the same time continues the essence of Marxism and Leninism.

It is also worth mentioning that “Marxism-Leninism-Maoism” as a concept is inextricably linked to the PCP’s and RIM’s syntheses of Maoism.¹¹ The RK has already criticized or rejected significant parts of the content of these syntheses. It is also worth mentioning that PCP, RIM and other organizations have had widely different perceptions of what is the content of “Marxism-Leninism-Maoism”. If we abstract away the political differences between the various organizations committed to “M-L-M”, only the label remains.

An alternative that has been suggested is that we call ourselves Marxists, Leninists and Maoists, “without the hyphen”.

What is Maoism?

Maoism as a global movement emerged as a result of the Sino-Soviet split and the Cultural Revolution. Historically, the Maoists have had different opinions. What specifically distinguished them from other communists was that they supported the visible line of the People’s Republic of China under Mao. So how can Maoism be understood without a revolutionary China?

Some place the essence of Maoism in the peasant-worker alliance, with particular emphasis on the “peasant” part of this alliance, as an innovative theory that is more willing to adapt Marxism to concrete realities.

Some understand Maoism as the “third, highest stage” of Marxism, a “science” that develops progressively in leaps and bounds. In this model, Maoism is a fairly detailed set of frameworks, schemas and theses for revolutionary work in all corners of the world.

Others find Maoism’s relevance in the Cultural Revolution, and in a spirit of innovation that leads away from bureaucratic organizational forms and strategies.

“Really existing Maoists” often don’t fit into one box or the other, so it’s not surprising that different people inside and outside the RK have different opinions and assessments of ‘Maoism’.

RK is a Maoist organization, but there are somewhat different opinions internally about the content of Maoism. The disagreements stem from different answers to these questions, among others:

- Is Maoism a science?
- What is a science in the first place?
- Is Maoism the third, highest stage of a science (Marxism-Leninism-Maoism), in which each stage builds on the previous one while also breaking with it?
- Or is Maoism a political tendency, suitable for responding to the problems that the communist movement faces today (in the “Epoch of Cultural Revolution”)?

- Is Maoism “Marxism-Leninism-Maoism”, or just Maoism?
- If we are Maoists, can we still call ourselves Leninists?
- What distinguishes Marxist-Leninists from Maoists?
- Is Maoism based on Mao’s texts and theories, or on the collective practice of the Chinese communists in the Chinese civil war, socialist construction and the Cultural Revolution? Possibly both?
- Who developed Maoism and who synthesized (summarized) it? Has Maoism been synthesized once and for all?
- To what extent is Maoism open to the teachings of thinkers outside the “classics”?

These discussions cannot be easily divided into “two sides”. On some points, there is broad agreement in the organization, and on other points, views vary widely from individual to individual.

The discussions summarized in this document form the background for the new platform of the RK, which will be ready in the spring of 2025. The process of writing that platform is underway, and we hope that it will serve as a real basis of unity for communists in Norway when it is published.

Even though the criticism campaign has ended and the political basis for the platform has largely been decided, this does not mean that we no longer welcome critical input. We always appreciate comradely criticism. If you have any input for us, feel free to get in touch via the contact form on our website.

1. <https://www.kommunisten.no/2023/12/fra-danmark-bemaerkninger-til-rks-standpunkt/> []
2. <https://www.kommunisten.no/2024/02/eit-bidrag-til-kritikken-av-rks-standpunktdokument/> []
3. See note 1 above. []
4. See note 2 above. []
5. <https://en.kommunisten.no/2025/01/13/rks-online-organ-is-now-called-the-communist/> []
6. See «The Paris Commune» in Marx, *Civil War in France* (this text is available in English, [here](#)), or Lenin (also in reference to Engels), including in «A new type of state that is emerging from our revolution», *The tasks of the proletariat in our revolution*, (available on our website here <https://www.kommunisten.no/2024/05/oppgavene-til-proletariatet-i-revolusjonen-var/>) or Lenin in «What should be set instead of the broken state machine?», *The State and the Revolution* (also available on our website, here <https://www.kommunisten.no/2021/09/staten-og-revolusjonen/>). []
7. See especially under «Organisation of National Unity», and «Criticism of the Draft of the Erfurt Programme». []
8. Normative: Containing a value-judgement. The opposite is descriptive. []
9. English version available at *Proletarian Perspectives*: <https://proletarianperspectives.org/communist-democracy-and-leadership/> []

10. This point is controversial. We therefore urge the readers to tackle the question themselves, scrutinize the sources critically, and then assess whether the claims are reasonable.

The following books and articles, which refer further to other primary and secondary sources, are a good starting point:

Claudín, Fernando. 1975. *The Communist Movement: From Comintern to Cominform. Part 1, The Crisis of the Communist International*. New York: Monthly Review Press. Available

from: <https://web.archive.org/web/20220116013229/http://www.marx2mao.com/PDFs/TCM75-1.pdf>. See especially the section «Stalin as revisionist: Complete socialism in a single country», p. 71-91.

Claudín, Fernando. 1975. *The Communist Movement: From Comintern to Cominform. Part 2, The Zenith of Stalinism*. New York: Monthly Review Press. Available

from: <https://web.archive.org/web/20220116013211/http://www.marx2mao.com/PDFs/TCM75-2.pdf>. See especially chapter 5: «Revolution and spheres of influence».

Förbundet Kommunist. 1971. «KKP og stalinismen: Några synpunkter». *Marxistarkiv.se*. Originally published in *Kommunist*, #2 1971. Retrieved

from: https://marxistarkiv.se/sverige/fk/kommunist-kkp_och_stalinismen.pdf. See especially p. 3-7.

OCML-VP. 1982. «On the State Under the Dictatorship of the Proletariat». *Ocml-vp.org*.

Opprinnelig publisert i *La Cause du Communisme*, 1982(2). Hentet fra: https://www.ocml-vp.org/IMG/pdf/19800701_cdc2_state_en.pdf. See especially the section «Stalin's mistakes on the question of the State», p. 17-19.

Note that the books and articles above were published before the Soviet archives were opened ajar. One should therefore consider the sources in light of the material that has become available after 1990. The sources below quote private correspondence with Stalin that has previously been unknown, and provide new insight into how Stalin himself thought.

Losurdo, Domenico. 2023 [2008]. *Stalin: History and Critique of a Black Legend*. Iskra Books. See especially p. 133-135. Note that Losurdo points out that Stalin believed the dictatorship of the proletariat is no longer necessary in all cases, precisely to defend Stalin.

Revolutionary Democracy. 2019. «Recent Writings of Revolutionary Democracy on the British Road to Socialism». *Marxist-Leninist Research Group*. Opprinnelig publisert i *Marxist-Leninist Currents*, juli 2019. Retrieved from <https://mlrg.online/history/from-2019-recent-writings-of-revolutionary-democracy-on-the-british-road-to-socialism/>.

Roberts, Geoffrey. 2008. *Stalin's Wars: From World War to Cold War, 1939-1953*. London: Yale University Press. See especially p. 247-249.[]

11. PCP: Communist Party of Peru. RIM: Revolutionary Internationalist Movement.[]